

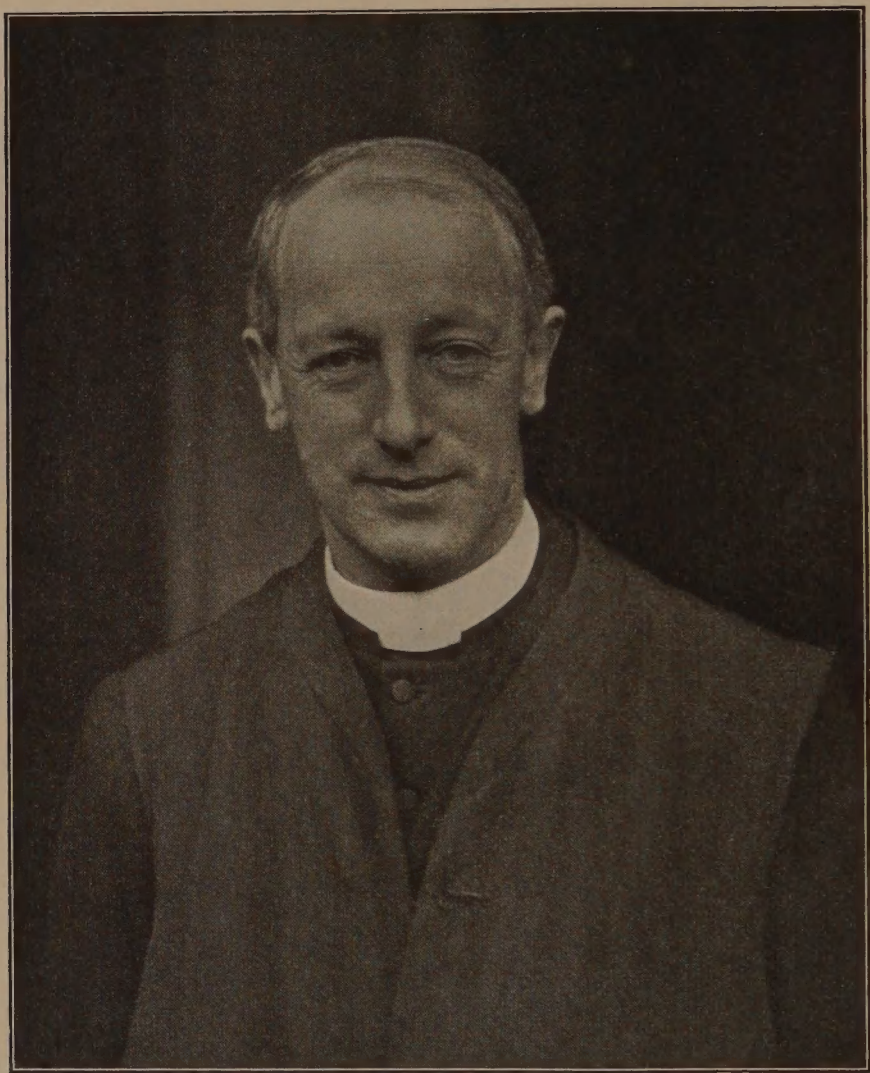
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CHARLES DOMINIC PLATER S.J.



CHARLES DOMINIC PLATER, S.J.

CHARLES DOMINIC PLATER S.J.

BY C. C. MARTINDALE S.J. M.A.

*The Conqueror, I will make him a pillar
in the temple of my God, and from thence
he shall never more come out, and I will
write upon him the Name of my God, and
the name of the City of my God, the New
Jerusalem . . . and my own New Name.*

APOC. iii, 12



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*To THE MEMBERS of the CATHOLIC
SOCIAL GUILD and to ALL WHO MADE
A RETREAT under FATHER PLATER:*

WHEN I resolved to offer this biography to you, as I did directly I knew I was to try to write it, I realized that it was bound to be, not just any kind of book, but a quite particular kind. I felt that though you were not Father Plater's only friends, yet that you were his friends and that he was yours in a particular way. It was in very great part that the Guild might be created and developed, and that retreats might be set going and thrown open to all, that he lived, and, I may say, died.

Some words, used by me on the spur of the moment in the sermon preached during the Requiem Mass for Father Plater at Oxford, brought me a number of letters. I said: "Each man who knew him felt, 'Father Plater loves me,' and 'Father Plater loves me.'" This expressed what I felt to be a fact, and not mere sentiment; and since it was recognized as true, I see that I dare not, even if I wished to or could, write a book which should give but a cold record of events, nor, again, be a mere panegyric. If I did, you would not recognize your friend, nor the living man as you knew him.

But this means that I must be less reticent than in an official biography; I must try to give details, trivial in themselves, yet each, I trust, a touch added to the portrait. Yet no portrait could adequately express his mobile features. I am bound to fail; do not think I do not recognize it. But you will see beyond the words.

So, if I am to try to tell you of the man, I must tell you of his growing. This means that he will not be shown at first, nor even perhaps at the last, as complete. Few, indeed, ever achieve perfection at all points ; certainly none all in a moment. Therefore, there will be faults to note ; imperfections, at any rate. Do not be indignant on your friend's behalf. Perhaps the finest thing in him was the way he tried to conquer them. More than once, in chaff, I told him he must go easy ; I had no wish to write his Life. " You will have to write it," he once answered gravely ; but added immediately, chaffing back, " and if you leave the crimes out, I shall come and haunt you ! "

I have been much encouraged to obey what was his real wish, as well as my own sense of what was honest, by some words addressed to me in a letter from one of his quite special friends :

" Thousands of young fellows feel as I have said, about him, I am sure, and if you can really get Father Plater into your book it will be a great help and spur to us, and I, for one, shall be for ever grateful to you. I have heard Father Plater say, in effect, that characters do not happen ; they are made ; and I would like to know how his own wonderful character was manufactured : how much of deliberate effort, of resistance, and struggle went to the making of him."

There is no room left for hesitation after a message like that. May it be remembered by those who read, here and there, a sentence they may not like.

I say then what I thought I saw ; and I do so, not forgetting that he had far older friends, friends for long far closer, than I was. For years I hesi-

tated, as I shall say, to intrude upon him ; for years we lived quite separate. My excuse for accepting to write at all must be, first, his genuine wish ; and second, the memory of the last three years of his life, which included a year of intimate and terrible anxiety, and finally of resignation to the end that I almost came to hope for.

All who have helped me, too numerous to specify by name, I now thank. Even with their help, I could scarcely have written this book without Father Plater's diaries, which, though composed spasmodically and in "telegraphese," have been invaluable. Besides these, there were bales and basketsful and cupboardsful of papers, most of them in complete disorder, for which I cannot pretend that the illness of his last years was exclusively responsible. I may frankly say that in trying to deal with these I shall certainly have made mistakes, though I have tried to check all I say. I hope to have them corrected by my readers, and beg pardon for them in advance.

I have, then, written thus, not as addressing vague possible readers but feeling I am speaking—yes, speaking—to real men and women, many of whom, after all, I know. And therefore, without literary style, but personally.

I cannot serve you in the way he did ; but at least you must accept this little book, as far as may be, in the spirit in which he did for you all the many things, great and small, that he attempted ; that is, in order that he might bring you closer to one another, and to God.

C. C. MARTINDALE, S. J.

CAMPION HALL, OXFORD.

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Charles Dominic Plater S.J.

Chapter I

CHILDHOOD

September 1875—September 1887

Breathe, Regal Spirit, a flashing soul.

THE ancestry of Charles Plater bequeathed to him a remarkable tradition. I will not insist on the fact that the family of the Platers had its origin in Poland, and that members of it played a distinguished part in the troublous history of that country. Yet it cannot count quite for nothing if a man can look back to lives instinct with the romance and the ardent spirit which seem proper to all that is Polish. And Charles Plater, to the end of his life, had St. Stanislaus Kostka for his patron of predilection.

His branch of the family migrated to England between two and three centuries ago, and settled, first in Suffolk, then in Kent. How it became Protestant, I do not know; but in it, for at least three generations, the ecclesiastical tradition ran strong. His great-grandfather was Rector of Whitstable, and during the great cholera epidemic had the horrible experience of burying a man one day, and on the next every one of those who had carried the coffin.

A son of this clergyman, who had clearly maintained, if he did not create, a family tradition of not shirking, was Charles Edward, Rector of River, near Dover, and later Rector of Newchurch, Romney Marsh, a position held by him till his death in 1854. His title to remembrance consists, however, in the fact that, together with the then Dean of

Manchester, Dean Bowers, he founded Marlborough College.

You might have thought that to see ancient houses, once the home of noble personages, turned into hotels, was an experience proper to our own odd days. But in the mid-eighteenth century a really beautiful house belonging to the Seymours had been let by its owners and converted into an inn. It was called "The Old Castle Inn," and thrived till railways robbed it of its custom, when it collapsed. Mr. Plater was largely instrumental in acquiring this, and it became the nucleus of Marlborough College, an institution originally founded, at least in part, to give facilities for good but less expensive education to the sons of clergymen. Mr. Plater's bust still stands in the hall of the college he helped thus to create.

Of his sons I must mention three.

Charles Eaton Plater was born in 1824 and became Rector of Dymchurch in Kent. He remained there from 1876 to 1906, a man of the most genial hospitality, of utter indifference to the distinctions of class, and so downright, popular, and racy in his manner of preaching that his sermons became considered, among the conservative fisher-folk, to be eccentric; but, then, all was to be accepted from one who practised so loyally all that he might preach. He had charge of the lifeboat rocket apparatus, and attended a practice connected with it only a day or two before his death. He had taken for his special duty the tending of the graves of shipwrecked sailors he had buried, and he survives best, for the eye, in a photograph which shows him wearing the heavy muffler and the uniform cap that he loved. His fine and rugged features might be those of

a weather-beaten coast-guardsmen. He died suddenly, at the age of 82, while correcting his next day's sermon, of which the text was : " Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might ; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest."

Herbert Plater, on the other hand, followed in the scholastic career of his father, and after a quite distinguished history at Oxford, where he was a sound scholar and a great boating man, he went by way of Radley to Marlborough, acting for a short time as an assistant master. Then he went to Newark. There he was for some forty years head master of the Magnus Grammar School. He was a very devout High-Churchman ; abstained every Friday and persuaded the school to follow his example ; always made the Sign of the Cross at grace, and always carried a Rosary in his pocket. In his last address to the boys he proclaimed the principle of life that had guided his work : " I believe, and have always taught, that all education worthy of the name must be based on, and be in accord with, the doctrine and teaching of the Holy Catholic Church." He died as Rector of Kirton.

A third son, Edward Angelo Plater, was one of those men for whose existence we must be all the more grateful because we so seldom meet them. For how should a man, gentle, courteous, absolutely un-self-seeking, advertise himself? That is what Mr. Edward Plater was, and his life was one of singular beauty and of a most fresh and fragrant charm. Yet, but for his son's career, the world of to-day would never have heard of him. It is a consolation to realize, after finding out about such a life, that there must be many such, beautiful and yet quite

hidden. One life like his is enough to make one think better of all mankind.

Yet I think it would be scarcely fitting to write much about Edward Plater, because too many of his descendants are still living, and I doubt whether their affection would tolerate a panegyric. He was born on February 22, 1834, and chose for profession, when quite a young man, a clerkship in the War Office. When in 1878 the War Office was in many ways remodelled, he left it, and took up music as a career, gave singing lessons, and for many years conducted "the best male quartette in London." He was, I understand, a pioneer in the revival of the unaccompanied singing of glees and madrigals. He had himself a really beautiful tenor voice. Music was an indirect cause of his conversion to the Catholic Faith, for he went with his friend Mr. Wilhelm Schulthes to the London Oratory to hear the singing. This was at the first Oratory in King William Street. There he made the acquaintance of Father Frederick F. Wells, and after a while offered himself definitely as a candidate for instruction. A number of Father Wells's letters written to the young neophyte exist; they show clearly the simple and sensitive nature of the boy—for he was little more—whom he was instructing; but I must be forgiven if I do not quote them. Edward Plater was received into the Church in 1851 to the great distress of his father, who afterwards went down to St. Mary's Villa, Sydenham, where his son was trying his vocation, in order to visit Father Faber. On entering the house, Mr. Plater fell forward and died in Father Faber's arms. Owing to these early associations of his father's Charles Plater was to retain a specially tender affection for the Oratory and for Faber in particular.

It was Newman who actually received Mr. Plater into the Church, and Cardinal Manning who, on August 5, 1865, blessed his marriage with Miss Margaret Harting, the eldest daughter of Mr. J. V. Harting of Kingsbury, Middlesex. The remarkable number of prelates who assisted at the ceremony proves in what high esteem the young couple, both from personal and family considerations, were held. Of the Harting family I speak below.

Mr. Plater lost a great deal of money when he changed his profession, and indeed his very virtues of courtesy and trustfulness allowed him to be "constantly imposed upon." I do not suppose he minded. He preferred to be able to continue to make friends wherever he went, with the porters on railway platforms, with fisher-folk. He had, it was said, as many friends as he had acquaintances. Having himself once hoped that God had given him a vocation to the Oratory, and tried for a while to follow that way of life, he could understand, and sympathize with, the call that came to his specially loved daughter and to his youngest son. In all sacrifices he saw the goodness of the God to whom they are offered, and followed, I think, Father Faber in his conviction that the greatest difference experienced by a convert is in "the whole view of God" that he acquires.

He died on September 16, 1897, of a cancerous affection which practically brought about starvation. Father Considine, S.J., then novice-master at Manresa House, Roehampton, came often over to Mortlake to see him during his heroically borne illness, and at the sick man's request wrote down the considerations by which he had cheered him, and Charles Plater always preserved this very sacred

relic. Charles, at the time a novice at Manresa, was allowed to spend the whole night with his father before he died, and sang the epistle at his funeral.

The Harting family, however, that of Charles Plater's mother, had always remained Catholic.

James Vincent Harting, his maternal grandfather, was educated at Downside and London University, and after spending some time in the office of Mr. James Harting, his father, who was a solicitor, he was himself admitted to practise as a solicitor in 1836. He had already shown much interest in history, but will be remembered with special gratitude for the legal service he rendered to the Church in England, having been from 1850 to his death in 1883 solicitor to the archdiocese of Westminster and to the dioceses of Birmingham and of Southwark. He was succeeded in Westminster by his son Mr. Robert Harting. But before this, he had been legal adviser to Cardinal Wiseman, and he had collected evidence in Rome on behalf of Newman during the Achilli trial. On many other very important occasions, such as the litigation which had the "Papal Aggression" scare for its first origin, he did work of the highest value. He was particularly interested in the history of the Carmelites in England, and assisted them when they came to Kensington, and was of great service, too, to the Passionists and even designed the badge which they now wear. For the Fathers of Charity he managed the buying back of St. Etheldreda's, Ely Place, the first pre-Reformation church to return to Catholic allegiance. He was intimately acquainted with many whose names are part and parcel of the history of our Second Spring: Father Dominic, who received Newman into the

Church; Father Ignatius Spencer; Archbishop Errington, and very many others. During his long illness he was almost daily visited by Cardinal Manning, who, when Mr. Harting died, gathered the family round him and said that during the twenty-five years at least that he had known him he had never seen him do any action that was not strictly upright and honourable, and that he had always looked on him as a model of what a Catholic and a gentleman should be. Dr. Ullathorne wrote: "His judgment was always relied upon in every legal difficulty that arose, and in every question of legislation that involved Catholic interests. Generation after generation of Bishops trusted his advice. We shall not find another like him." "No man," he wrote next day to his Vicar-General, Canon Estcourt, "amongst the laity has rendered more important services to the Church in this country."

Mr. Harting's eldest son is James Edmund Harting, F.Z.S., Fellow and late Librarian and Assistant Secretary of the Linnean Society. From 1877 to 1896 he edited the *Zoologist*, and the natural history department of the *Field* from 1870 to the present day; he is the author of many admirable books, on birds especially, and may have found his inspiration from the traditions of his grandmother's family, the Whites of Oxfordshire, from which the naturalist Gilbert White was descended. Mr. Harting, who celebrated his 80th birthday on April 29, 1921, had by then contributed nearly 2,500 separate articles and reviews to the *Field*; I have been allowed to see the letter of congratulations addressed to him on that occasion by the editor and the staff. It combines warm affection with the admiration due

to one who is probably the highest authority in England on the subjects he has made his own.¹

His sister, Miss Joanna Harting, inherited her father's historical interests especially, and is the authoress of the charming book *Catholic London Missions*, and of the history of the Sardinian Chapel in Lincoln's Inn Fields, now pulled down. On the other hand, his daughter, Miss Etheldreda Harting, has followed Mr. J. E. Harting in his love for natural history, and in 1905 joined the *Daily Graphic* staff as writer of its weekly Nature Notes, and in 1906 became editor of the natural history columns of the *Queen*.

I do not know to what extent Father Plater used to speak to others about his family; to me he did so seldom, but always very interestingly, and with a firm conviction that much in his temperament was due to that of his forebears, whether directly by means of heredity, or perhaps more probably owing to the associations and pressures of the environment of childhood. I cannot remember him suggesting that his grandfather, Mr. J. V. Harting, was likely by example or in any other way to have transmitted to him those more unusual—I had almost said, sensational—qualities which he himself possessed. After reading such records of Mr. Harting as I have been able to consult, I have formed in my mind a picture of a singularly attractive character, strong yet gentle, God-fearing yet genial, shrewd yet spiritual, but not endowed with the highly coloured, restless, imaginative disposition or moods of the artist or what we mostly mean by genius. He would seem to have been that really noble, simple, and reliable type which used to be produced, not alone, no

¹ There is a fuller notice in *Men of the Times*, 11th ed.

doubt, by the old Catholic families, but notably by them.

On the other hand, Charles left me in no doubt that his maternal grandmother counted for very much, in one way or another, in his development. She was Scotch, being the daughter of Colonel Robert Hamilton Fotheringham, R.E., and her mother was connected with the historical family of the Farquharsons of Breda. Her grandson may almost seem to have inherited her gift of Scottish "second sight": however that phenomenon may have to be explained, she undoubtedly possessed it, and in her husband's house at Kingsbury used often to see the ghost that haunted it. She did not mind this in the least, finding it a "nice ghost," and quite unalarming. It is certain, too, that she was sensitive in the extreme, even outside the area of the preternatural, had very strong likes and dislikes, and attached a strong emotional value to events. It must not be deduced from this that she was either of the languishing type which we associate rather absurdly with Victorian young ladies, or again, a modern neurasthenic; she was extremely witty; she had the gift of flashing repartee, and composed *vers de société* of extreme brilliance which she always refused to have published, and which, judging by those that Charles remembered and recited to me, must have been startlingly modern and all but indistinguishable in spirit and even form from the lampoons and "scurrilous rhymes" he himself so loved to write. I expect that in hers was as complete a lack of malice or of what might hurt, as there was to be in his. Yet neither must we imagine that this really remarkable lady was an unpractical genius merely. She not only acted as her husband's amanuensis,

and transcribed, in her beautiful script, documents too confidential to be entrusted to any other hand, but she devoted all her leisure to the education of her children and even composed for their benefit a short English history in verse, which was in fact privately printed and served as a very effective aid to memory. It has its pathos to see her grandson having recourse to exactly the same expedient, not only when he was learning, but when, as a Jesuit, he was teaching at Stonyhurst, and it would be curious to try to estimate into what unlooked for brains influences to be derived from the genius of Mrs. James Harting have stolen.

Mrs. James Harting died on April 4, 1908, and Charles wrote in his diary of that date :

“She has had a wonderful life : great courage and patience. Her character seemed to grow very gentle of late years without losing any of its strength. It is difficult to realize that she is gone.”

I think that when I say that Charles Plater's mother in many ways resembled her own, I shall have said at once as much and as little as I ought to. She died on April 13, 1922, Maundy Thursday. She, till Charles went to Hodder, kept him always with her, and her influence far more than any other moulded his character. Canon Roche, who prepared the boy for his first Communion, and was an intimate friend and almost daily visitor, wrote at the time of Charles's death that he could plainly see in many of his most striking characteristics the fruition of what she had consciously or unconsciously taught him. Humorous, cheerful, high-strung, “believing all things” in her charity, she was the most unselfish of women, and herself arranged

for Charles to go to Stonyhurst when she foresaw his vocation, which was bound to take him from her. But to him she remained always known by endearing names, made use of in his talk with her and in his letters ; and even to me he never would allude to her save as his " little mother."

Of this remarkable stock, then, Charles Dominic Plater was born on September 2, 1875, being the youngest of the family, which numbered, beside himself, two sons, Philip and Herbert, and a daughter Hilda. I have suggested that his home did not altogether lack austerer elements, and indeed, Victorian upbringing was seldom very soft. He might, indeed, have grown up somewhat cowed—he had heard himself alluded to, once—though not, of course, by his parents—as an " uncalled for child," and disconcertingly spoke of himself by this name when asked, by a visitor, who he was ; but he was habitually surrounded with so much wise love and tenderness that his childhood was always happy and his disposition developed into a very sweet one. Not but what some of his remarks were so very unconventional as to provoke almost any amount of amused dismay and rapid suppression. What would you do with a child who suddenly demanded of you : "What is God's other name ? I am Nickie Plater ; Mr. Nickie Plater. Well, is He Mr. John God, or Mr. Thomas God ?" " Oh, Nickie, dear, we don't speak of God like that. We say Almighty God." " I don't like that," retorted the alarming child. " It oughtn't to be ' all-might-he,' but ' all-he-can.' " One anecdote has become famous through the delightful pages of Mr. E. V. Lucas's *Domesticities*, though it is there put down, if I remember right, to a little girl. " Mother," asked the small boy,

“ what does God have for dinner ? ” “ God doesn’t need any dinner, dear,” she answered. “ I see,” he replied. “ I suppose He has an egg for His tea ! ” This power of turning the tables was once exercised at his mother’s expense in a way that suggests that he was already an expert in the apt use of logic, fallacies included. He once broke an ornamental fan ; his mother asked him, according to wise rule, if he knew who had done it. He paused, and then said : “ Well, as Phillie isn’t at home, and Doggie says he didn’t do it, I suppose it must have been yourself . . . ”

His first confession was a matter of immense importance to him. He arranged its details with the greatest accuracy. He decided to have for companion in it a little girl who lived next door, though her years of indiscretion were not yet five. “ Now,” he said, “ I can’t have you all crowding in at the same time as me. She and I will go in at one side and all the rest of you must go in at the other.”

Not all the anecdotes have this theological or ethical colouring, though I suppose the tale about the plums—he had been told that if he ate so many he would suffer for it, and he replied, “ I don’t care if I suffer *drefffully* ”—might come under the head of asceticism. So may the incident, part of which he narrates, though not as about himself, on p. 26 of his little book *A Week-end Retreat*. There were two old ladies whom, as a child, he did not like to visit. “ Mother darling,” he affirmed, “ I’ll do anything you like except castor-oil and the ladies.” But now we learn that he resolved to visit them once a fortnight. Else, his recorded sayings are such as any child, I think, might have made.

What was really remarkable was his love for music, which later on amounted to a true passion. He was quite small when he adored a "rather barbaric" composition by Ferdinand Gottschalk called *Pasquinade*: "Play *Pasquinade*," he used to implore his aunt, "do please play *Pasquinade*." And he was only five when he used to sing, quite correctly, *The Midshipmite* and *Three Jolly Sailor-boys*, at the top of his voice. He had too a tremendous sense of humour, which is not the same thing as the appreciation of the merely funny; he used to read aloud with the greatest zest the rhyming epitaphs from Max Adeler's *Out of the Hurly-Burly* when he was only eight, and was convulsed with laughter at their American wit.

It may seem to some a tragedy that one who loved his family as well as Charles Plater did, should have been able to see so little of them during his life. He need not be pitied more than they pitied themselves. No one but felt that his work, and indeed his vocation, made close communication, even by letter, impossible, and that it was right that this should be so. His relatives were proud of and grateful for the example of his self-devotion, and would not have claimed more than he himself could give them. Affection remained unclouded and, indeed, most tender. He went, I know, to see his people whenever he reasonably could; he took endless trouble over family affairs; he would have been glad to see put on record a much more complete account of the virile races from which he was descended than what I have room for here. But there was more than interest or service or delicate sense of duty or even gratitude in his connexion with his home circle. There was an intimacy of singular charm, which

seemed somehow timeless, and to pay but little regard to differences of age. He gave chaff and advice, and scolded and submitted, alternately, and appeared to regard his family as composed of the jolliest and most amusing of companions, and not merely of relatives deserving of the due measure of esteem. To the end he called them all by nicknames in and out of his diary.

Chapter II

AT STONYHURST

September 1887—September 1894

A nature of this sort, with such capacities and ambitions, carries about with it a sense of supremacy, a natural, indispensable self-conceit which acts as a sheath to the bud, and is the condition of healthy development. Break it down, and you bruise and jeopardise the flower of life.—MRS. H. WARD, *David Grieve*.

IN 1887 Charles Plater went to school at Stonyhurst College in Lancashire, and Father A. Cortie, who brought the small boy from his London home to the preparatory school at Hodder House, remembers, first, how Charles surreptitiously drank up all the sherry and water, prepared by this priest, *en route*; and then how quickly he made himself at home and collected friends round him. Yet from the very outset his vibrant response to the stimulus of the moment was at times too much for his control, and at the first oral examination that he underwent he had to be sent, by Father John Gerard who was holding it, into the corridor to walk his excitement into calm.

There are singularly few anecdotes of this or of the rest of his school life extant. As for its Hodder period, I can only find that when the Apostleship of Prayer was started there on December 8, 1887, he was appointed its first secretary. His piety deserved the post, and his eagerness needed a job. The discernment of Father Cassidy, then in charge of Hodder, seems to me already clear in this appointment.

At least I can vouch for the whole-hearted affection that Charles retained for Hodder, and recall the zest with which he shared in the prepara-

tions for its jubilee in 1906. Dare I add that this was the only enterprise in which I have gleefully watched Charles Plater being in gross and in detail defeated? Everyone will agree that it was a charming trait of Father Cassidy to equip himself with a number of plans not one of which he had the slightest intention of not seeing carried through. He would then ask advice, and after warmly applauding suggestions quite alien to his intentions, proceed to modify them, with the utmost grace and simplicity, till they harmonized at every point with his original scheme. Sometimes their framer would be unconscious of what had happened and depart convinced that he had been obeyed; sometimes one would make a suggestion for the sheer joy of watching Father Cassidy gradually convert it into its exact opposite. It was to me an unending delight to contemplate Charles Plater, whose brain hatched ideas at a terrific pace, having his plans remodelled by the fine but remorseless fingers of Father Cassidy.

It was Charles, however, who composed the "Good-night Hymn" by which the jubilee celebrations were concluded. It was sung to the tune of "Come to the Manger," and was rightly popular, though not, perhaps, up to the really exquisite little songs written for the same occasion by Fathers Atkinson, Bliss, and Keating.

At the College itself he found wider scope, and began to develop very quickly. It was fortunate, I think, that he at once found subjects for hero-worship. "Humility," says Mr. G. K. Chesterton, "follows with the precision of clock-work every one of the great joys of life. . . . All full-blooded and natural people, such as schoolboys, enjoy

humility the moment they attain hero-worship." Charles's first hero was Father John Gerard. It is true that he came under his direct influence only when he reached the "Higher Line" or upper half of the school. But from the outset he received the boy's homage from afar. Father Gerard was a very remarkable man indeed; a real educator—for he looked for what a boy had in him, and drew it out in a way no less sympathetic than vigorous; and he had inexhaustible stores of fascinating lore to impart; a keen and well-equipped man of science; a *littérateur* of very catholic tastes, and extremely versatile, witty, and unconventional. To Charles Plater he came to stand for the ideal Stonyhurst: an incarnation of Catholic tradition, yet enterprising and progressive. To this first instance of a personal cult which made a substantial difference to Charles's whole life, I may here add two more, though their impact came a little later.

Father E. I. Purbrick and Father R. F. Clarke shared, then, with Father Gerard a homage almost amounting to adoration, paid by the enthusiastic schoolboy to the extent of imitating now and again even their external peculiarities. Thus I am assured that it was in imitation of Father Gerard that Charles first began to take snuff. The influence of Father Clarke was indeed special in its tendency, for that most lovable of men stood in Charles's eyes for Oxford. It was characteristic of the boy, as of the man, that he could not stay satisfied with an admiration that might not be warmed into an affection, and for both Father Gerard and Father Clarke he had a very warm affection indeed. I remember that when the news of Father Clarke's

sudden death reached St. Mary's Hall just before Charles went to Oxford, he took long to recover from the shock, and could not tear himself away from the chapel after the notice had been read out to the community at dinner. But if Father Gerard stood for Stonyhurst, and Father Clarke for Oxford, Father Purbrick seemed to the imaginative boy something wider still; he represented all that he conceived as most ideal in the Society of Jesus, and almost symbolized, too, for him the ideal English Catholicism. The old man and the boy ended by knowing one another intimately; letters of great interest, full of detail, and astonishingly confidential continued to come from the aged Jesuit to the young scholastic, who, on his side, never failed to visit Father Purbrick whenever he could. Father Purbrick retained extreme freshness of mind to a great old age; he was keenly interested in what was being thought by generations which must have seemed to him very young indeed, and he imparted his own hopes and schemes with a frankness which might have seemed almost bewildering had one not felt him to be a man whose discretion was to be trusted, and that the intimacy which was being shown was a kind of mandate, and that he expected that its recipient would feel, not flattered merely, but under an obligation to entertain no petty ideals or aims, but to think and act imperially. "Imperial" is indeed the epithet which seems best to describe Father Purbrick's mind, so universal was its outlook and yet so alert was it to detail, and I should have rejoiced to write these few lines of appreciation, and indeed gratitude, even had Father Plater himself not been so eager that a life of his old friend should be written: one was in fact pro-

jected, but it had been left too late, and adequate information could not be obtained even from America, where much of his most important work was done. The quite epic events, therefore, of the period of Father Purbrick's conversion, and his altogether heroic adventures in the days of our Catholic renaissance, are likely to go unrecorded. In Charles Plater, however, much was due to his influence, and must be regarded as his memorial.

I should like to add to these two names that of Father James Robinson, for many years "First Prefect" at Stonyhurst. Charles loved and laughed at this grim and tender-hearted man, made songs about him, and had great and lasting influence with him.

In Charles's very first year at school he was next in merit for the Essay prize, though one of the youngest in the youngest class of competitors; later, he established a record by winning the English Essay prize five years running. When in Syntax, or the highest class but two, he was made by Father Gerard boy-editor of the school magazine, and the "Current Events" now numbered pages where they had counted, before, but paragraphs. He had a considerable command of literary English, and talked as he wrote, at once with formed phrases and with bold colloquialisms. In fact, I think it must be because of his wonderful phrases that the adjective "old-fashioned" is so often applied to him by those whom I have asked for reminiscences of this period. It is difficult to us to imagine Father Plater "old-fashioned." Yet not in the winning of prizes nor in his literary efforts was his peculiar brilliancy best shown. It is almost startling

to be told by one of his most intimate contemporaries that

“ while we were proud of him, and thought of him as one to deal with situations, we looked upon a certain small boy many classes below as the intellectual genius of the School.”

I may not add a name : let me but affirm that this young genius has certainly shown, in his chosen career, all the talent that was foreshadowed in his school-days, and all the audacity of which Charles Plater set him the sublime though unneeded example.

This audacity was so obviously good-humoured, that even his most outrageous rhymes and lampoons went unrebuked and were actually applauded by the very potentates they derided. It looked, at one moment, as if this would have to be qualified. When he advanced to the next class, Poetry, he found himself under a master whose views on literature were almost as definite as his own. Father Charles Coupe was a man of rotund eloquence, who could not tolerate the common or even the colloquial style of expression, which reached, for him, its nadir of vulgarity, as of sentimentality, in Dickens. Now Charles Plater was devoted all his life through to that author. Violent recrimination, in and out of class, and even in the magazine, became therefore habitual and added greatly to the joy of the school at large. The inevitable day came when Father Coupe read out an anonymous composition with great gusto. “ *That,*” said he, is “ English. By whom should you suppose it to be ? ” “ Dickens,” answered the schoolboy, who had instantly perceived it to be by Father Coupe himself. A scene of Homeric splendour ensued ; but I like to say that this most

kind-hearted of pedagogues never hurt anyone badly by his thunderbolts, least of all Charles Plater, who introduced me to him when I first came to St. Mary's Hall, spoke of him always with affection, and kept carefully to the end of his life a number of Father Coupe's sermon MSS., which he had given him.

None the less, when Charles went up to the top class, Rhetoric, where he was taught by Father James Kendal, "Beware of Charles," said Father Coupe to that priest; "he will try to patronize you. He even tried to patronize ME." This, Father Kendal writes to me, meant, with Father Coupe, that Charles had gone to the limit of "aggressive sociableness." "Aggressively sociable!" You could not wish for a better description of Charles Plater in his unchastened youth, and even after that.

In Rhetoric he combined preparation for the London matriculation with the Stonyhurst "honours course" in classics, occupations which seemed to his master quite incompatible, since the one demanded a good deal of drudgery and accuracy, and the other, wide reading and a rather impressionist estimate of what was read. However, he got through his matriculation examination with credit; he won the scholarship for the highest place obtained in it by a Stonyhurst boy; and he secured the £20 prize for classical honours, which must have pleased Father Gerard, who had a great devotion to the honours system.

At his last examination in Rhetoric, he was put on to construe a chorus in the *Antigone* which the class had not yet reached in its preparation. "We held our breath, knowing that he could not even find the place." They need not have held it. The examiner had been rash enough to describe the

chorus as beautiful: that did for a lead: "I am afraid, Father," said the unruffled youth, "that I could not do it justice." Unruffled too was he when, visiting a friend in the infirmary and finding him equipped with two tea-trays, and having at once attacked the extra one, he realized that it was intended for the Rector, whose step was forthwith heard approaching. Charles dived, tray and all, under the table. The cover was inadequate; the Rector stumbled over the protruding legs. "What's this?" asked the astonished priest. "Your tea, Father Rector," answered Charles, emerging with the devastated tea-tray, which he offered politely to his superior. Another tea was ordered.

Charles was, Father Kendal confesses, "an unwhipped boy," not from favouritism, but because to chastise him "would have been like flogging a nervous, high-strung mare, and he never did develop the traditional qualities of the unwhipped boy." It was best, says Father Kendal pleasantly, "to deal with him by means of his own weapons, for his tongue was both sword and shield, and there was no danger of inflicting an incurable wound." "He was *facile princeps*," his very close friend, Father W. MacMahon writes to me, "and none of us could compete with him save when we stole a march on him, because he was occupied with forwarding the whole line of possible activities."

No one who reads this will believe that a boy who said and did this sort of thing, and was encouraged to say and do them, was not "spoilt." He nearly was. He became regarded as just a little too definitely a portent; his magnificent drawl caused him to be known commonly as "Chawles"; his caricature of the Superb style got him nicknames

like *Carolus Hic Noster* and *Noster Hic Magnus*, and he was quite frank, later on, in owning that this had made a difficulty for him, and that it was hard quite to avoid playing up to the suggestion, and that others might be annoyed by it, as indeed they sometimes were. But I shall say that he escaped real spoiling. Throughout he "worshipped heroes."

Meanwhile, he was becoming a clever debater, could read off Homer in creditable blank verse, and had real charm of manner when reciting. The master who composed for him the little speech which Charles was chosen to deliver at the Stonyhurst Tercentenary dinner, had the embarrassment of hearing that it was the best of the evening, "not because of the matter, but because of the admirable way it was delivered."

Did the Tercentenary reveal, too, to Charles the loveliness of simple souls? All his life he was to have the power of meeting, at once and on equal terms, men and women of an education quite different from his own. Certain it is that it then became his business to collect local matter from the old inhabitants of the district with a view to adding colour and interest to the records then put together. This sent him wandering through farms and cottages, and he made friends whom he never forgot. Whenever he returned to Stonyhurst, he made a point of calling at Kemple End and at Dutton Lee, and received the generous Lancashire welcome from many whom he had known as a boy, and who never treated him as if he had quite ceased to be one. Nor had he.

Exactly when Charles felt in his soul the call to become a priest, I cannot be sure. I am inclined to think that no other ambition ever counted seriously with him. The ancient Catholic tradition of his

mother's family, and the generous spirit of self-offering that was his father's, will have joined to create, in his home, the conviction that to make this sacrifice of their son to God was in reality the highest privilege. And, from the outset, that, in the boy, responded which, from his history, we see to have been no mere aptitude or instinct, but the genuine acclaim of a vocation. And once he had met Father Gerard, quite apart from other considerations, I doubt whether he would have sought the fulfilment of his ideal anywhere save in the Society to which that priest belonged. There was a double argument. Father Gerard had gone to it : and the Society, at what Charles Plater deemed its best, had come to be visible in Father Gerard. The priest pointed to the Society, and he might, in order to do that most effectively as far as Charles was concerned, have pointed to himself. At least Father Gerard never played the young hero-worshipper false. The time came when Charles would be able to disentangle his ideals from the contemplation of any one man or even institution ; but at the first the power of the twofold vision was very great.

The first part of Charles Plater's life, then, definitely closed. He was accepted as a Jesuit novice. The experiment, it might have been surmised, would be too much for his high-strung nerves, his restlessness, his need to be different from everybody else. But all his life so far he had been, it seems to me, just escaping the disasters that might befall such a temperament in such an environment. The "unwanted child" had not been repressed into bitterness or impotence. The clever child, stimulated by so much cleverness around him, had not acquired the *pose* of quaint questioning and unlooked-for repartee.

And the pious little boy had become no sanctimonious prig. Then, from the anxious air of London and the correct amenities of Brook Green, he had been sent to the wide spaces of Lancashire, to heathery, wind-swept fells, and had neither wilted there, as though the climate of the North had been too bracing, nor lessened in his sensitiveness to the true and beautiful things of culture, as though that rougher world could only serve to harden delicate tissues. The lad whose family traditions did not count, assuredly, for nothing, had found there a suitable expansion, yet a tonic, for his imagination, helped potently by the Elizabethan walls and towers, by window-panes aglow with armorial bearings, and by the thousand memories of heroic Catholic days supplied by Stonyhurst and the country round it. In a school where the free friendliness between staff and boys seems always the first point on which unaccustomed visitors make their comment, he had met with exceptional welcome and good will, and had kept his head. He could remain so unabashed, because he felt that he never meant, for all his audacities, to neglect respect, and even the professorial victims of his attacks saw that his slips were no more than the inequalities due to inexperience. His fellows had looked on him as a portent, a show-case, as something to be quoted; and yet he was no boaster nor basked idly in his popularity. His enthusiasm for life overshot himself and he could not even catch up with what revealed itself as so enthralling and so challenging. People saw him as far ahead of themselves; he saw himself as nowhere near the point to which the essential interest of things deserved that he should reach. It might seem arbitrary to say that it was his Catholic faith that rescued him,

or at least the grace of God. Arbitrary indeed would it be, had we not the rest of his life by which to explain him. So true is it that you cannot tell what a thing is till you see what it becomes.

I have tried to indicate the influences that played upon the childhood and the boyhood of the future Jesuit, and even what, from the scanty records, we may judge to have been structural elements in his personality. Of them all, the religious element would be the hardest to assess because so many boys begin, like him, with a tender devotion to the Mother of God, to the Sacred Heart of Our Lord, to the practices of prayer, and with absorption in the hour of the holiest Communion of all. Only by seeing how these graces maintain themselves and develop the man's whole history, are you justified in saying that *there* precisely have been the roots of his life, and that all else in him has gradually swayed towards that, modified itself in favour of that, will have to be construed in terms of that ; so that we are bound to say that never, at Charles Plater's innermost, was there the likelihood, as there was indeed the possibility, of his becoming just the artist, just the sparkling journalist, the diplomat, the actor, or the organizer. We are able, when we know what he became, to watch his beginnings and his early growth with veneration no less than with amusement, bewilderment, or excited interest ; with awe, nor anxiety alone. Nor with pity ? I am not sure. Such a character is bound to be, in any case, a lonely one. But with an intermediate loneliness only. For though the shell of success, acquaintanceship, occupation will certainly be thick, yet it is really negligible ; for there will not be emptiness within it, but the abiding companionship of God.

Chapter III

FIRST YEARS IN THE SOCIETY OF JESUS

September 1894—September 1900

Une discipline traditionnelle ne comporte sans doute aucun risque pour des esprits mous ; mais elle en comporte, et de redoutables, pour ceux qui n'esquivent pas la lutte. En revanche elle seule permet les victoires complètes.—R. SALOMÉ, Vers la Maison du Père.

(i)

ON the evening of September 7, 1894, Charles Plater entered Manresa House, Roehampton, the Jesuit novitiate.

Manresa is a Georgian house that used to belong to the Earls of Bessborough. The original building was stately enough, though not large. Its pillared portico looks out over Richmond Park, which seems in fact, from the house, to be conterminous with the grounds, for nothing but a walled drop divides them. The Society has added a great deal to the old house in a style that is quite simple and yet, to my mind, in keeping and by no means lacking in dignity. It is a place which, almost beyond expectation, clothes itself with glamour, at least in retrospect, and I do not wonder that Charles Plater grew unfeignedly to love it, and gladly returned to it for his Oxford vacations and for retreats. Few houses, so readily as a novitiate, recall the very pure, fresh, and noble aspirations with which the religious life is almost always entered on, and such were certainly Charles Plater's when he first went there.

Not that his arrival had about it any of the rather cloying romance with which popular imagination often invests this beginning of a novice's career. He came with several others, some being members of his

old class at Stonyhurst, and his arrival was hilarious in the extreme. Whether or no he proceeded (as in some verses on himself, addressed to a friend, he says) to climb the roofs, to ride the sedate novice-ship pony, and to steal the peaches, I am not sure. I think it probable. Certainly a good many anecdotes survive to show that he was something of a Ribadneira among the novices, and that the late Father Daniel Considine, his novice-master, displayed all the insight and perhaps longsuffering that marked the treatment accorded by St. Ignatius to his own mercurial protégé.

Externally, nothing much of interest can be recorded of a novice's life, and I join to the two years spent by him in the novitiate, the next two, which were also passed at Manresa. For Manresa House shelters three communities : the novices, the juniors, and such older Fathers as may be stationed there. The juniors are young men who have taken, at the end of their novitiate, the three vows of Religion : Poverty, Chastity, and Obedience. They are usually engaged in studying classics, mathematics, or science, and in preparing to pass some examination in view of a university degree. Except on special feast days, these three communities do not fuse. Charles Plater took his vows on September 8, 1896, and passed the higher certificate examination in July 1898, obtaining a distinction in English. This is rather piquant in view of the almost savage criticisms pencilled on his English essays in the only notebook of that period that I can find. His English had then, I confess, most of the defects of its future qualities to a marked degree ; but the Oxford examiner, at any rate, had the insight to judge him by what he saw he might become, rather than by his superficial

vices of flamboyance, vague assertiveness, and, I fear, facetiousness. Already in 1894 he had started a book called *Gleanings*, adding, "Gather up the fragments that none be lost. . . . This is to be a sort of stock-pot of miscellaneous pieces of fact and fancy; afterwards, in days of maturer judgment and less chaotic notions of men and things, to be sifted out and boiled down. And also it will serve as a lesson of humility in the after time." Notes on Anglicanism, the Gospels, and so forth, are followed by a miscellany of verse, but I should not have mentioned the book were it not for the résumé of a chapter on Erasmus and some scattered notes upon him. Plater liked Erasmus, and the "Erasmic" element in him is worth thinking of. In temperament the two were far from dissimilar, and had Plater lived in the sixteenth century I think he might have made a real renaissance scholar. Had he failed to sweeten his life throughout by fidelity to grace, I think he might have spoilt his brilliance, as Erasmus did, by self-consciousness, bitterness, and second-rate ideals. But since Erasmus entered his own novitiate against his will, his whole spiritual development was different. Meanwhile it is only fair to say that Charles Plater was at this time quite spellbound by a very brilliant and fascinating personality, and that it was hence that he derived his devotion to Erasmus. A safer stimulus was given him by the presence of Father Purbrick, who was at Manresa in the capacity of Master of Tertians.¹

When I entered the novitiate, he was beginning his second year as a junior. I arrived with some to whom he had been, ever since schooldays, some-

¹ See p. 124.

thing of a hero, and his reputation in the novitiate was remarkable. He was regarded as abnormally brilliant and austere, and to have "broken his head." This meant, on the whole, that he had become neurasthenic owing to too great concentration on the spiritual topics considered in the noviceship, coupled with much introspection, and a great measure of external self-suppression, always difficult to do wisely if in other ways you do it well. He had, in fact, to be sent during his juniorate to teach a class at Wimbledon College, an occupation likely to remove some of the pressure inevitable in the enclosed life of study at Manresa. All I remember of him myself is that I heard him preach a sermon on the Patronage of Our Lady, which he began at a great pace, and with the words: "We live in an age intolerant of patronage," in so patronizing a voice that I still smile at the recollection of it, and often chaffed him about it. On certain days, as I mentioned, the novices meet the juniors for recreation; on my first experience of this form of festivity, I entered the juniors' room knowing of course no one, and very shy. Brother Plater instantly came up and welcomed me, but so effusive was he, and so voluble, and so unlike, in phrases and intonations, to everyone else at Manresa, that I was made even shyer by his kindness. Oddly enough, I think his "Oxford voice" became less "Oxford" as the years went by, though his speech remained rapid and with heavy emphases; he always combined with this some pronunciations which are more common in the North, like the flat *a* in *pass*. There was no affectation in any of this, though some people thought there was.

These externalities have, however, no importance.

Is there any way of judging his spiritual development during these four years?

When beginning this memoir, I asked myself what use, if any, I should make of Father Plater's spiritual notes. I have never been able to convince myself that just because a man is dead one has the right to publish what, during his life, he never would have shown to anybody. But then, if that evidence be suppressed, readers are right in hesitating to accept what may be, after all, merely the subjective impression of the writer. Yet perhaps the most important part of a man's self-documentation could in no possible circumstances be published.

I have felt justified in using Charles Plater's novitiate notes in order to make clear that the faults for which he was afterwards criticized were perfectly well realized by himself, were hated by him, and were from the outset generously attacked. No panegyric of a man can equal that which shows him to have known, and all his life to have generously combated, his faults. That is how character is made; and a memoir which is not merely a record of things done has no excuse if it does not reveal a character.

In the later parts of his life, I have quoted very sparingly, and only what I felt to be really constructive and to add definite material. Any other use I have made of private documents has been for the formation or corroboration of my personal opinion, and will not be discerned by quotation marks. Frankly, I do not think much will have been sacrificed by this method; indeed, the more legitimately affection may want to know all that is to be known about Charles Plater, the more it will resent any lack of reticence, and the less it will condescend to its inevitable temptation to curiosity.

At least we are justified in saying that Charles Plater's life was all of a piece.

A tiny notebook survives inscribed: "Charles Plater—1896—The Pilgrim's Scrip." In it he kept the memoranda of the prayers he called his *debita*, what he felt he "owed" or had promised to friends or associates to whom he was grateful. The youthful handwriting of that date sets down on the first page: "I can be a Saint . . . I must be a Saint"; and underlines the conclusion: "I *will* be a Saint." Sentiments to be found in the notes of how many fervent novices, but maintained with a like energy by how few! At first he looks back, and records the date of his entry into the Apostleship of Prayer, 1889 (but it was 1887); into the Sodality, 1890; the Living Rosary, 1896; and his making the "heroic act" in the same year.

As the years go by he writes always the same little line: *Dixi, nunc coepi* (Now I begin). So in 1901, in 1902; in 1903, at Louvain, he sees that "A new kind of life will be—is wanted of me"; and in 1906, "I have been twelve years in the Society; *Dixi, nunc coepi*"; in 1911, after his tertianship Long Retreat, "Thank God for the blessings of my first year in the Priesthood. Now at last may He make me a Saint." And in 1918, almost at the end: "*Dixi, nunc coepi*. In Thee, O Lord, have I hoped."

A novice's notes are for the most part generalities, or faithful transcripts of what he has heard his instructor say. These throw no light upon him. Brother Plater's accurate and voluminous record of the retreats or exhortations made or listened to by him at Manresa, I do not quote. Here and there, however, personal stuff juts out. He was all his life

apt to make sweeping statements and to generalize, but from the beginning he tried hard to give body to his vague aspirations and inspirations. Thus, beside many sentences like "I must be more charitable," you find that this sensitive lad, who disliked as acutely if not as readily as he liked, takes his "pet aversions" one by one, and works at each until he has made them into real friends. He forces himself not to "dodge people," and keeps a "sociable list" composed of persons he does not want to meet and therefore cultivates. I do not know that this was really the best way of preventing himself "getting people on the brain," but he certainly grew rapidly more able to make himself "all things to all men." He displays no doubt a tendency, which a novitiate accentuates, to reduce everything to a scheme—*schemata vitae* he calls them; and he insists that he must have "dodges, plans, little methods" for everything. Then the pendulum swings back, and he writes: "No schemes, worries, plans, accumulations of books, etc., promises." He was at his best when he could live according to an often repeated motto: *Age quod agis* (Do what you are doing). This, he keeps saying, will correct his "vapidity of thought," his "scatterbrainedness," and the day-dreams that he finds so much more tiring than steady work. This, coupled with his natural intensity of character, implied, and probably increased, at first, a certain feverishness of behaviour. Just after his noviceship he writes:

"Feather-pate! You are always being carried off your feet by something. DON'T! Father D. C. says, 'Pause—make pauses, when this unhealthy eagerness is troubling you.'"

"Keep your hair on!" he continually cries, but

even more often apostrophizes himself in a delightfully boyish way :

“Now! Answer honestly!” “Now, Charles, look here!” “Charles D. P.! How long are you going to behave like an ass? There is no doubt as to your idiocy at present. Now, for God’s sake, pull up at once . . . Put the matter into the hands of your solicitor (B.V.M.) and buck up! 1. Duties: (Spiritual) Do what you can! Don’t strain! But DO see God in them! 2. (Social) Don’t be blind. Help! you might be such a power for good!”

No one will be surprised that so impressionable a lad, especially in hours when everything was “all fog; most wearisome; utterly antipathetic,” should have wanted to yield to spiritual fatigue, and seek for what was pleasant merely. This tendency to what he called “softness” was for long his “Great Dragon,” his “Lion”; and his superiors warned him with the utmost candour against the triple weakness of the “soft man, the scatterbrained man, and the vain man.” He found himself positively craving for sympathy, and reacting to its lack with either despondency or “feminine jealousy,” and catching himself out in advertising fatigue, or nerves, especially when they were not really bad. For when they were, he became just irritable and foresaw himself as permanently “soured” and a recluse. It seems strange to read that his past appears to him a “languid horror”; and, in short, he is using no mere formula when he diagnoses that he requires to do himself continual “violence,” even though at the same time he perceives that this must always be done in “a sweet spirit of love.” Here he was right, and here indeed he succeeded well, and never

failed to fight himself hard but lovingly, if I may so put what is one of the paradoxes of asceticism.

That his other great difficulty arose from his exceptional talents and the notice he attracted is no less natural.

In December 1895 he writes :

“GRAND CAMPAIGN against Noster-Hic-Magnus-ism, which friends may chaff me about, but which may severely jar sensitive minds and may be very irritating. . . . Weapons. Negative: Don't quote experiences, relations, and own pet subjects. Don't be jaunty and condescending. Positive: Ask questions about pet subjects of others. Throw yourself into it.”

And at other times :

“Don't interrupt . . . Don't be over-gushing with visitors and strangers. They will discover your ‘innate charm’ soon enough. . . . Don't let mind dwell on thoughts of rich people—fashionable folks—‘Culchaw’—imagining myself working among them—imagining Lady Vapour's brougham at the door. Rot! Think of the Passion and Our Lord's laborious life. Don't dabble too much in up-to-date literature.”

And one of the most heavily marked passages in his notes is from “dear old Faber,” in which that author says that his difficulties are due to the Catholics being too “cocky,” thinking that they have the game in their own hands, and relying on advertisement and functions. “We are getting more hollow and presumptuous every day.”

In Charles's second year of juniorate he sees with anxiety that :

“It will probably be my duty to take the lead in many things and I am likely to be looked up to and followed.

Humility! Not to fancy myself. Not be patronizing, smart! Be very careful at debates, recitations."

Had then Charles Plater grown up awry, and had he not taken himself firmly in hand, you might freely have expected that his life would have been a conflict between self-indulgence and self-display. You cannot tell which would have conquered, but you may be sure that he would have done shoddy work, unlasting stuff. He could not have failed to be brilliant; but he would have been so erratically; and he would, I think, have grown quickly bitter under criticism and rebuff, of which he was to have plenty, and you may foresee that he could not have survived in the Society he had joined. He might have become just a very clever and quite unscrupulous journalist. If, on the other hand, he had dealt with himself rigorously, yet perversely, he might easily have injured his brain, and certainly his spirit, by violence; have made himself, as he constantly says, "impossible," and have become petrified. That he neither slacked off nor maltreated his soul thus, is surely due, after the grace of God, to the wise direction he received from his novice-master, for whom he kept an undying affection and gratitude. It is not usual for the Rector of a Jesuit community to hear the confessions of his subjects. But Father Considine allowed Brother Plater to come to him for confession after he became a junior, and continued and indeed reinforced the direction he had given hitherto.

"*Deo Gratias!* Thanks be to God a thousand times who has given me such consolation! Father C. has given me leave to go to confession to him! . . . Without my saying anything . . . he told me in a very plain and definite way

what I am to do. His words seemed like dew sinking into my poor dusty soul. 'Never forget,' he said, 'that the way by which you are to advance towards sanctity is by confidence. You must dwell on considerations which make much of God's goodness. You must cultivate liberty and freedom of soul, which of course doesn't mean breaking rules.' Now don't forget it! Dwell on it. Light and space. God loves me! All is well! [And a little later he was told:] 'You want to shake out more sail. You have a tendency to contract, to narrow. You will have to counter-act it all your life long!''

Since, then, it was clear that Charles Plater was to have the duty of fighting himself, it was due, I think, to this sort of direction—unexpected, I daresay, to some: for who thinks of Father Plater as likely to be stiff and circumscribed?—that he fought himself in the right way, not by mere repression, but by control and development.

It remains that you can seldom judge a man by his notes, least of all Charles Plater, who, directly he had written a thing down, was apt to think it had happened, and when he had underlined it, if possible in red ink, that it would go on happening. The acutest at introspection are not always the most tenacious of will. That he kept his "resolutions" is what his subsequent life makes certain.

(ii)

In September 1898 Charles Plater went to St. Mary's Hall, Stonyhurst, to do what was normally a three years' course of philosophy, and I naturally lost sight of him, though only for a year. When I arrived I found he had firmly embedded himself in the life of the place, and was in fact absorbed in that multiplicity of things against which

his novice-master had very explicitly warned him. My own recollections of him are, at this time, focussed around the Alms-houses and the Oxford class. The Shireburn Alms-houses are singularly beautiful buildings, now unfortunately falling into decay, since the road by which they stand is no longer, as it was, the main route from Preston to Clitheroe. However, a few old men still lived there, and a certain number of the inhabitants of neighbouring farms and cottages came to the Sunday instructions that the students of St. Mary's Hall used to give there. Either I went up with Mr. Plater during my first year, when he was "catechist," or he, during his first long vacation from Oxford, came up with me, when I shared that post myself. But I remember very clearly how devoted the little congregation was to him, how versatile he was in his methods—for the old men were very intractable at times—and above all, his playing of the harmonium. We took it in turns, as usual, to give the instruction, and whoever did not give it had to play. Charles Plater, who had a real gift for the 'cello, could not achieve more than two tunes on the harmonium; one of these was "God Save the Queen," which he performed with such astounding harmonies as to disguise it quite respectably; the other was a well-known song of Albert Chevalier's, which he played with extreme solemnity and with ecclesiastical chords. The congregation either saw nothing odd about it or just accepted it as "Mr. Plater"; but I used to find the effort to keep serious almost as exhausting as the tramp up the fells to reach the Alms-houses.

I have now to recall a name which the students who then and later formed the Oxford class cannot

invest with too much gratitude and indeed affection, that of Mr. D. A. Slater, now (1922) Classical Professor in the University of Liverpool. It would be unfitting for me to linger on, and impossible to exaggerate, the devotion shown by Mr. Slater in continuing for so long to coach, both at St. Mary's Hall and at Stonyhurst College, men who could not give all or even most of their attention to his first-rate training; or on the manifold artistic graces, the whimsical charm, with which he enveloped his erudition; or on the ruthless courtesy of his corrections of the amateurish work that we all, I confess, showed up to him. Enough to say that a unique encouragement, as well as a most forceful direction, was given by him to his class, the former undisguised, the latter so sweetly veiled that it was chiefly by perceiving your own improvement that you became aware of it. Quite apart from the exceptionally close friendship which subsisted for many years between him and Charles Plater, and which altogether outstripped the usual relation of teacher to taught, this modest act of homage is due. Alas! Plater was not to become a scholar quite after Mr. Slater's heart; the professor loved the literature more than he did, perhaps, its writers, while Charles's affection always "leaned to mankind": he never was to relish accents, optatives, the "enclitic δέ" in any form: that did not prevent, as I have suggested, Mr. Slater's influence having been in some ways the predominant one in this part of Plater's life.

It was during his second year at St. Mary's Hall that Charles was asked to edit the Blandyke Papers, volumes of essays written by the students there and appearing every month from October to May.

He wrote but few articles himself, all of a purely literary sort, and characterized by all his old fluency and "Macaulay-isms," and without any sign or prevision of the future. I may say at once that when he returned later on to this house he edited two special volumes of the Blandyke Papers, one on Mycenæan and Cretan archæology and one on social subjects; but from the relics of his earlier efforts neither of these could have been foreseen.

"In philosophy," one of his friends writes to me, "we felt that Plater had at last met his match." Part of the philosophical training at St. Mary's Hall consists of what are called Circles; one of the students explains the subject which the class has been studying, and two of his fellow-students attack his doctrine, which he has to defend against their objections. It was felt that Charles Plater could not solve the difficulties brought up against him, but talked round them, and preferred throwing up a cloud of generalities to getting to the point.

I will confess that at this time this was true; and the truer it was, the more creditable Charles Plater's life is, viewed as a whole. For, knowing his tendency to the vague, the plausible, and to the glib formula, he reacted vigorously against it. I do not think he really tackled this point till he reached Oxford, but tackle it he did; and whether he did so at the stimulus of his professors there—and Mr. Slater was a sort of foretaste of Oxford—or by reason of his maturing appreciation of what was really first-rate and what was not, the actual work he had to put out, always in defiance of his temperament, must have cost him very dear. Until I had to go through all his notes; to sort, or rather to learn

the method by which he himself aimed at controlling, his innumerable papers, clippings, lists, bibliographies, and the like, I never guessed one-hundredth part of the drudgery that must have filled his life. People, even to the end, were apt to think of him as meteoric, even slapdash ; a man of easy epigram, sketchy generalization, picturesque but inexact talk. Not at all ; or, scarcely that at all. Not only in organization did he undertake an amount of brutal mechanical writing, which demanded bookful of addresses, dates, statistics, and the like ; not only when he had begun a thing did he show a tenacity in carrying it through, such that the instances of his getting tired and giving up are negligible compared to those of perseverance year by year till he died ; but the amount of knowledge he acquired on all sorts of topics, focussing round his one or two main interests, was enormous ; and if he could not always, or even often, tell you exactly what you wanted to know, he always seemed to have a reference to it, and what is more, could nearly always find it, and at once.

I should like to register my firm conviction that there cannot be many men in England who do more dull hard work than Charles Plater did, so unaided, and so much against the grain.

But at scholastic philosophy he was not very successful.

Nor can I remember what share he took in games. He loved picnics, but did not care for fishing. At least he used to urge that he never caught anything save one dying salmon, in his umbrella. But then, he never had an umbrella. . . . He was, however, devoted to swimming ; the water inspired him : while in it he used to sing the most fantastic verses ;

or call out half a Limerick, plunge, emerge gasping, and finish it.

In the summer of 1900 it was announced that he was to go at once to Oxford, without waiting to do his third year of philosophy. I expect this was due to the great belief Father Clarke, then Head of the Jesuit house of studies at Oxford, had in getting men there as young as possible. Partly, too, it may have been that the double strain of preparing for Oxford and doing his philosophy at the same time was proving too much for his none too steady nerves.

The Oxford house had not been opened very long, and the vaguest opinions prevailed among the younger men as to the kind of life that was led there. By a few it was realized to be one of exceptionally hard work; but others still cherished the illusion that it was a sort of variety entertainment, helped out by a certain amount of almost luxurious living. I do not think it was ever quite realized how austere was the régime that Father Clarke, especially at the beginning, was bound to maintain. The circumstances were so novel that not only had any temptation to relax religious discipline to be avoided, but all sorts of actual and possible critics had to be guarded against. All this uncertainty added to the zest with which Plater looked forward to his experiences ever since he had known he was to go to Oxford; but the crown to his delight was the prospect of living under Father Clarke. The blow was therefore severe when just before his departure for Oxford the news came that Father Clarke had died suddenly at York, worn out, beyond any doubt, by the heroic efforts he put forth in vacation, as in term-time, to earn enough money to keep his impecunious house on foot. Thus Charles Plater began, at the outset,

to learn to pluck forth the too human elements from his hopes.

However, he went up to Oxford with many close friends, and found others already there ; and it is no exaggeration to say that the group of those in which he was now to form part was of exceptional merit, intellectually and in other ways. So the future was far from gloomy, and though his confrères at St. Mary's Hall said good-bye to him with regret they felt in some ways, I expect, that he was going to an atmosphere which would be more congenial to him, and in which he would be able to develop his special qualities more freely than he had been able to do, so far, in the severe and enclosed world of the House of Philosophy at Stonyhurst.

Chapter IV

OXFORD

September 1900 — September 1904

*"O strenuous, dreaming City
Of work and wisdom and transcendent vision,
Of calm Olympian pity,
Of careful praises, delicate derision,
O dreaming, doubting City,
"I borrowed of your treasures,
Golden and grey, of Rome's majestic story,
Of keen Athenian pleasures,
Of Egypt's gloom and Babylonian glory—
I trafficked in your treasures . . ."*

L. LANGWORTHY ATTOX.

ON September 24, 1900, Charles Plater began, then, his University career with a good many dreams in his head. The spires of Oxford floated for him in an almost magical atmosphere. They suggested all sorts of regenerations ; they stood for an ancient culture which was yet alive and fully modern ; with what you got there, you could rejuvenate, revivify what was old-fashioned and ineffective. Charles Plater was still at an age when "to criticize" means, on the whole, to find fault : I do not imply that he was a sour or ill-natured critic ; but he was ready to deride what seemed to him imperfect, and to be intolerant of a disposition to "stick in the mud," or even to creak your way, contentedly, down ruts. After all, young Jesuits were certainly being sent to Oxford to get what their normal training could not give them, else they would have stayed at home. Besides, Plater had listened to Father Clarke and Father Gerard, whom no one could accuse of disloyalty to Stonyhurst or to Jesuit methods ; but they both of them hoped much from

Oxford ; and to the pictures they painted of what might be and should be, he at his age inevitably added sharper contours.

Though the death of Father Clarke¹ altered for him the whole quality of the attraction of Oxford, still Oxford remained itself ; the enterprise was still young ; he would find still a manifold stimulus, a variegated scene. Above all, he would meet, as he had already learned to love to do, all sorts of men, instead of one sort ; he would mix with a full flood of life, instead of swimming, however strongly, down one channel.

Such were the hopes and such the perspective, in part perhaps illusory, that Charles Plater took with him to Oxford, as, from my talks with him then and afterwards, I can feel fairly certain. Yet, when the moment came, he went there almost timidly and with many prayers. God always stood at the gate, as at the goal, of whatever avenue he entered. However, his buoyant spirit swept him rapidly across the hour of hesitation, and few would have guessed the anxiety of which he was himself only half aware.

On his arrival there he began to keep a "log." It was to be :

"a record, as vivid as one could make it, of one's own life as it flowed on from day to day, of the new faces and places, and above all of one's own personal views, ideals, and criticisms . . . transparently honest and genuine, and as soon as the least *arrière-pensée* in the direction of publica-

¹ At that time the Jesuit house of studies at Oxford was a private Hall, and took the name of its Master. Father Clarke was succeeded by Father J. O'Fallon Pope, and the Hall was therefore called Pope's Hall, a name not dictated, as so many thought, by ultramontane piety.

tion or posterity presents itself, the MS. must be promptly cast aside. . . . To put down simply and clearly a record of my life, subjective and objective. There need be no harrowing introspection or affectation of intense feeling, and above all no suspicion that someone else is looking over my shoulder."

He smiled, later on, to re-read this naive and rhetorical apologia. He was at any rate looking over his own shoulder when he wrote it. The diary became, however, quite different from what he had intended; he agrees that it may be shown to two or three people, and that it was much more a record of mere facts than a *journal intime*.

I may as well say that this diary, which spreads unequally over his four years at Oxford, is to my mind almost the most important document that he left. It is the only mass of writing within the period of which you can watch him markedly change.

It begins in a style so fluent as to reveal his appreciations as still superficial; later, when it is much more scrappy, it indicates far more of his real mind and interests: it is, too, at first, jocular and flippant almost to the point of vulgarity, and its first term's records contain the only ill-natured descriptions that I can recall in anything he wrote.¹

Oxford had him at once, he says, "spellbound," but it took just a year to exercise its really penetrating influence, and to discontent him, once and for all, with the cheap and merely clever.

Father Gerard was there to show him round; he pursued the traces of Father Clarke, and found,

¹ Oddly enough, one of the two persons whom he thus superciliously described, and who was held to be a bitter anti-Catholic, he was destined to entertain much later, at Campion Hall, and to pass on him a very different verdict.

besides, a number of old Stonyhurst friends and started at once to have tea or lunch at their rooms, and relates how he scored off dull or, again, unorthodox dons. But after his matriculation on October 10 the steady work of lectures began. He would wish me to recall his real and lasting friendship with his tutor, Mr. H. F. Fox of Brasenose, and, perhaps rather later, with Mr. Garrod of Merton, and his deep admiration for Mr. Strachan Davidson, afterwards Master of Balliol. The courtesy of Oxford conquered him, and he learned to translate his own innate kindness of disposition into what was better, even, than courtesy. The same essential generosity is visible in the pleasure with which he records any amiable thing said about the Hall, and the distinctions or good qualities of those whom he met. All the goose-feathers turn into swan's-down, and you love him the better for it. Visits from Father Purbrick make red-letter days for him; he loves to share his friends and to introduce them to one another. When he went down on December 11, though conscious that his log looks like a mere record of "gadding about," he feels he has spent not only a happy but a laborious term.

After a vacation passed at Manresa House, he returned to a term important chiefly because it gave him that interest in archæology which seems at first so out of place in one whom we think of as essentially a man of modern problems. But there was for him an immense romance in the discoveries of Sir (then Mr.) Arthur Evans, which were revolutionizing all our ideas about the antiquity and character of the Mediterranean civilization. And he had always loved Homer. So the vision of Mycenæ, Troy, Tiryns, and Knossos begins to flicker through

the Oxford scenery; he haunts museums, gets learned in ancient pottery and metal-work, reads Iliad and Odyssey with critical eyes, develops his faculty for judging evidence, and creates for himself an enthusiasm which would help him across long dry tracts of study, and with which he would be able to inspire the classes he afterwards taught.¹ Even so, it was not the strictly scientific aspect of the topic that interested him, but its human and its propaganda value. The stones came alive; men drank out of those old cups in the museum cases and he felt himself to be drinking with them, and he entered into vital connexion with a race of men the existence of which had, till lately, not even been suspected. Also it was an up-to-date subject to lecture on. Meanwhile he made acquaintance with men like Mr. Percy Gardner and Mr. Myres, and others connected with the Hellenic Society or the British Museum, and soon gave so much attention to pre-history that his tutor, who had begun by marking his Greek proses with alphas, now informed him that they were "hogwash," and forbade him to read another English book till he had finished Moderations. "Lord, help me!" sighs the undergraduate; and indeed, I think it was from this term and the ensuing vacation that he experienced that will to overwork that lasted for the rest of his life. In term he studied about ten hours a day and in vacation he averaged about seven, and his work was always passionate. The term had, however, been fruitful in one friendship which was to be, I think, as warm and certainly as permanent as any in his life. Mr. F. F. Urquhart

¹ In 1902 he wrote for the Newdigate Prize Poem, of which the subject that year was Minos, the mythical King of Crete. But his work had neither conviction nor inspiration, and did not succeed.

of Balliol, whom, of course, he already knew well, introduced him to Dr. William Barry, then parish priest at Dorchester, some miles out of Oxford. Plater, who began by being a little mystified by his brilliant paradoxes, ended by understanding the real power of judgment they implied, playing upon a mass of knowledge at once chastening and stimulating to the young student. It was to Dr. Barry's inspiration, now formed, that he owed his determination to learn German.

The summer term contained more boating and bathing than had been possible so far, but fewer visits. But Charles's health already began to resent the liberties he took with it; he had much insomnia, and rather later on a definite illness which gave him acute pain. When sleepless he studied, or wrote scurrilous and highly personal verses about his professors or his confrères, or, if he were really suffering too sharply, would awaken Robert Monteith, his most intimate friend at the Hall, and remain with him for several hours. Monteith's own temperament was in some ways not unlike Charles Plater's: both had imaginations that tortured them; both found that physical pain destroyed the possibility of maintaining mental perspective in solitude; and the reliance that Plater could put upon Monteith was a godsend, you may say, to both of them.

Vacation spent at St. Mary's Hall did him much good; on September 23, 1901, he returned to Oxford, and I came with him as a freshman, and was able to make closer acquaintance than hitherto. He could now, indeed, assist as well as absorb. "His friendliness and optimism," a freshman of that date writes to me, "widened the whole life at Oxford for me, and as it were offered to me the

freedom of the University which he had himself appropriated. He took one's interest for granted and developed it."

From now, however, till March 1902, when Moderations began on the 6th, there is nothing to chronicle. We used to go for walks, all of which he notes in his diary, but they were mostly occupied with "shop-talk," he discoursing to me on various topics connected with his approaching examination. He thus refreshed his own memories, while it was of obvious help to me that I should profit by his experience and his always original and picturesque manipulation of what was apt to become so stale.

Moderations over, he went down to Wimbledon College with "a very light heart; eighteen months' work off my mind," and at once starts most legitimately to distract himself. He goes to the House of Commons and hears Campbell-Bannerman call Chamberlain "a malevolent slanderer," and Chamberlain call Bannerman "vitriolic," while Dillon gets suspended for saying Chamberlain has told a d—d lie. Much exhilarated by these full-blooded contrasts to the elegant recriminations of Oxford, he returns on the 24th to hear Balfour bring in the Education Bill, is introduced to John Redmond, and was back under the spell of University atmosphere, when he found himself listening to Jebb. He records a whirlwind of visits, mostly to his family, then at Mortlake, and their friends; he seems almost always to puncture his bicycle tyres, and either for this reason, or not, arrives back late for meals and "feels a fool." He hurries to and fro between Wimbledon, Roehampton, and Farm Street, and rejoices to meet so many of his confrères, and at Wimbledon gets to know the Army

students and savours the sweets of popularity. I say that deliberately. He had the most direct and loyal affection for his friends—his diary would suffice to prove it; he was apt to be swept away by the charm of individuals; he knew he could achieve the easier sort, too, of popularity, and admitted it. He still, moreover, looked towards the possible utility of his acquaintanceships.

“I don’t see enough of X, Y, and Z here. Some are quite enigmas to me. I must exploit. . . . It’s curious how I develop sudden and vigorous interest in new characters, and do not feel happy till I have won their confidence and fathomed their disposition. X interests me enormously and seems disposed to make friends.”

It is quite certain that this active interest did not always last; how should it? But he never exactly dropped people, and I think he was always an admirer of what interested him. He was no chill analyst of souls, even in these youthful and more superficial days.

He says he is doing German “assiduously,” an optimistic verdict; and “dabbling” in music, an understatement, for it was a real and lasting refuge to him; he writes down carefully all he hears, has long talks with Father Driscoll, who was then raising the Wimbledon choir to an extremely high level, and plays much ‘cello.

The prospect of his examination results haunts him.

“Am convinced I am going to get a second. This result will tend to damp my ardour, blunt my enthusiasm, and discount any work I may do later. But there may be compensations; I hope it will throw me back more intimately upon myself, and save me from living upon outward success. . . .

“Mods. results out. Two Firsts—*Deo Gratias*.—A Second for me—also *Deo Gratias*. I feel it more than people can imagine, but realize that with God’s blessing it may be the making of me. I have been too ‘plausible’ all along, and it has done me harm.”

He returned to Oxford and flung himself into Greats work. Men’s first impression on tackling this is presumably despair. The mass of historical material is so vast, and so little of the detail, especially to a mind like Plater’s, seems educative. Impossible to get into touch with life through this accumulation of financial, military, and legal minutiae. Plater never wanted to become an erudite, nor to be an authority on academic matters. However, he did his history loyally; his notebooks are miracles of neatness and full of detail; but personal comments are practically non-existent. I do not mean he was so thin-minded as to see nothing in history, but he still sought for the human nature it might display; when he could not find that, he did the needed drudgery with precision, consoling himself when he could with ingenious theories, like Dr. Grundy’s, who knows what really happened at Marathon, or Mr. Verrall’s, who could prove that all Horace’s love-lyrics were really addressed to his wife. Philosophy therefore appealed to him more than history did, especially psychology and ethics, and political and social theory. In these were opportunities for practical applications. As for metaphysics, he had done a certain amount of this, of course, at Stonyhurst, and this helped him in so far as it had familiarized him with much of the terminology, and had given him the idea of what orderly abstract thought might mean. In fact, it is recognized that the scholastic training is a tre-

mendous help to men who, at Oxford, find no system taught, but, on the whole, criticism of systems merely, or the account of what philosophers have thought. Yet, to arrive with certain formed views, orthodox, but based, it may be, on no very wide or first-hand reading, may be the occasion of anxiety or even anger, when you find men not only rejecting what you have held to be demonstrated but arguing with skill and even a modicum of conviction for what you had thought to have been confuted. Plater's power of intellectual sympathy, and his determination to be really sincere in what he thought and said, saved him indeed from feeling injured by contradiction, and he was excited rather than made anxious when dislodged from a position; but he owns himself again and again "bewildered," "in a hopeless fog," and he continued to prefer what would be easier to use. As consolation, he goes to all the music he can, develops the Pope's Hall quartette, and even attends High Mass at the parish church, on the grounds that "I had such an irresistible craving for High Mass that I simply had to go. . . . It was a relief to talk to the Holy Ghost after weltering in Marius the Epicurean. . . . I have seldom been so impressed by a book." Else he rows, bathes, goes to endless teas, but can note that "I have worked fifty-one hours in the last five days," and unless he was ill he seldom did less than that.

On June 23 he went away to Stonyhurst for the Long Vacation.

It began, assuredly, with a thrill.

"At Blackburn I made friends with the engine-driver and came into Whalley on the engine, driving it myself for the

last few stations. Most exciting. Nearly pulled up short of Langho, as the steam brakes work so easily. Whistled vigorously at intervals, blew off steam duly at the stations. Filled the boiler. Burnt myself against a steam pipe. Driver and stoker amused at my enthusiasm. People *en route* looked on in mild amazement."

The strain of the past term had been too much for him, and his diary is full of phrases like "No sleep worth mentioning." He had, too, a form of indigestion which led him to think his heart was out of order, and had fits of faintness. Even now he was working far too hard, though it was difficult to do otherwise in a house where everyone else was working too. Examinations were impending, and he only met his fellow-scholastics at recreation or on walks. These, however, he enjoyed as never before, so much was Oxford widening his experience and sympathies. Here is a charming little episode. His joy at Mr. Monteith's brilliant success at Oxford was only dimmed by the conviction that another friend, no less dear, had done badly. Good news, however, came.

"No sleep last night. But I almost cried with delight that T. had got a First after all. He was in the chapel making his meditation and I couldn't help sneaking in and whispering, '*Deo Gratias*, old fellow, you've got your First.' Then we waited at the chapel door for him to come out, which he did after about a quarter of an hour. Then we all fell upon him and thumped him; we were too delighted to say anything."

Towards the end of July the community of St. Mary's Hall went to Barmouth for their yearly

fortnight,¹ which happily interrupted the terribly heavy toll of work that he had been exacting of himself. He had tried to get in Plato's *Republic*, Thucydides, Appian, and a good deal of lecture revision since his arrival. On the way back he visited Port Sunlight, which impressed him more than it would when his social ideas should have been more developed; and some of the worst of the Liverpool slums. But he makes no comment; the future does not dawn; he prefers to note down with accuracy the cigars he smokes. The development of music at Stonyhurst, a new scheme of pedagogic lectures, a little geology, diversify his work during the rest of the vacation.

" 'It is a thrilling thing,' he notes after one of his 'chipping' expeditions, 'to uncover some delicate piece of God's handiwork that has never been seen by mortal eye. That was covered up long before man appeared upon the scene at all.' "

But he was all the while discussing, on walks and at recreation, a thousand things, though without much conviction. Almost he acquired a scruple lest he should lapse into dilettantism.

" All the way back W. gave me an outline of the science course here, which interested me much, though of course it was the barest skeleton. I must get him to continue it.

¹ It was during this "villa" or a similar one rather later that Charles had his first serious "attack." He had arranged a meeting between the community and another Jesuit community spending its own fortnight at Colwyn Bay. Things went wrong: they failed to meet. The day was appalling; but Charles felt himself responsible. He scoured the country in search of the Colwyn Bay group, and ended by a collapse.

‘Dabbling’ like this may be a bad thing, especially if one were to accept it as a substitute for knowledge. Yet as a mere sketching out of the ground I think it useful, especially if one has an attraction towards it. I feel that the information that I get in this way, though ludicrously slight, does remain with me; and I think it well to have some ideas about every great branch of knowledge: at least it helps one to understand illustrations from and references to scientific facts, etc., and gives one sympathy with men whose interests are widely different. Besides, if one comes to regard the ‘whole of science’ as one’s province, one breaks open a number of pigeonholes into which new isolated pieces of information may be put, with more chance of survival. . . . Hence among other things, the tendency to become a good listener instead of always airing one’s own tattered shreds of lore.”

He followed the retreat given at the College in September, and during it kept his 27th birthday. “It fills me with dismay . . . Anyhow, I am still in the Society.”

He returned to Oxford after a brief stay at Mount St. Mary’s College in Derbyshire, on September 27, and attended the Tercentenary celebrations of the Bodleian Library, at which Cardinal (then Abbot) Gasquet presented the congratulations of the Vatican and Bishop Casartelli those of the Library of Louvain. He was impressed by the flamboyant foreign gowns, but quite as much by the American delegate, who, in the agitation of the moment, presented his address to a mace-bearer under the impression he was the Vice-Chancellor. But the diary this term shows signs of becoming more philosophical, or at least of recording philosophical discussions with Father Joseph Rickaby or Mr. J. A. Smith, his tutor. But he catches himself up, and says it should only contain events regarding “the casual self,” which is better

than its superscription : "The Log of a Lunatic," rather self-satisfied, I think, in its self-derision. I think, too, that "casual" was what he was feeling himself just now. A film of depression lies over these weeks. He fears he bores people, or frightens them. He regrets the absence of Monteith, and resolves to see more of Father Rickaby, but at once is nervous lest he take up too much of his time, and then, "I cannot talk *at* him, as I would to a younger man." But he made one new acquaintance, the late Mr. A. H. J. Greenidge, of Hertford College, who was his Roman History tutor. This meant a real friendship, the more remarkable in a University where "dons count for next to nothing." Mr. Greenidge took him to his heart with a complete lack of reserve ; and Charles Plater suffered from reserve, especially as he thought it existed where it did not, "owing," he says, "to my own horrible sensitiveness about my friends."

The term, with its sixteen lectures a week, ended, and he went down to Wimbledon on December 15.

Music soothed the vacation : in the interval of his crowds of visits he had his voice trained by Father Driscoll, and tried to develop a "counter tenor," but I think that his sing-songs with the Army students did not assist the training. However, the great event of the vacation was Mr. Laurence Housman's Nativity play, *Bethlehem*. He found it entrancing, and went again and again. I went with him, and we nearly quarrelled about it. It seemed to me a charmingly sophisticated revival of what was tolerable only when done with perfect unconsciousness, and as a direct expression of sentiment, and therefore by people who believed every word that they were saying. I could not even join in his

efforts to get it done at Stonyhurst, for even there the spontaneity would have been lacking.

He returned to Pope's Hall, much cheered up, on January 15, 1903.

The term was placid, but proved important. At a meeting of the Newman Society, the society of Catholic members of the University, Mr. Wilfrid Ward led a discussion on the future of Catholicism in England. Mr. Urquhart, Mr. F. de Zulueta (now Regius Professor of Civil Law), the late Lord Ninian Crichton-Stuart, Lord Edmund Talbot, and others spoke in what was really a very important debate. Mr. Ward's views are well known and need no summarizing here. But the great weight of his authority, his extreme charm and unaffected culture, and the real width of view combined with warm Catholic piety that he displayed, made an immense impression upon Plater, who passes a night of "wild sleeplessness." From now on, we observe in him a definitely widened outlook. Anything short of national in its scope became increasingly intolerable to him, and he clearly began to reflect more and more how he should apply to the general Catholic good the work he was doing in the unenthusiastic city.

He decided to go to the Jesuit house at Canterbury for the vacation, rightly sure that in anything where ideas were concerned you could not do without French.

The vacation was just what he wanted. He responded vehemently to the high temperature of the French house; he was enraptured with the French charm; profoundly moved by instances, he believed himself to see, of true French spirituality; was instructed in many points concerning home and foreign news of which he had been ignorant; was

impressed, as well he might be, by the wonderful French talent for organization ; was struck by the professional, not amateurish, knowledge of their subject in many of the French priests whom he met ; was stimulated, in the very way he loved, by their gift of brilliant generalization ; felt so much at home that he could deride, with shouts of laughter, customs or ways of speech without the least danger of being misunderstood ; and, I should say, acquired more ideas in those few weeks than in all his Oxford career so far, widening as he had found it. He now made the acquaintance of P. Léoncede Grandmaison, afterwards editor of the *Etudes*, an encounter destined to be of the utmost service to him ; of P. Jules Lebreton, P. de la Servière, and others whom he was to meet later on. The name of P. Penfentenyo passes through his pages, though he does not guess what it will mean to him, once the retreat movement has revealed itself as part of his vocation. He collected an immense amount of material concerning the situation in France, and put his willing hosts through a deal of music.

I quote a line or two which are significant of much :

“ Holy Thursday. Watched before Sepulchre from 9 p.m. to 1 a.m. ; an hour for a friend ; an hour for X, who isn't strong enough to do a night watch, and two hours for some other friends of mine, for Pope's Hall, etc. etc.”

Next day he preached the Passion sermon at the Catholic Church in Canterbury.

At the end of his stay he writes :

“ Making every allowance for the French temperament, I really do believe that there are two score of people in the

house who will be glad if G. and I return here as we hope to do. I have certainly never spent such a happy vac., and the 'delectable litany' of my friends has grown much in bulk during the last five weeks. *Deo Gratias.*"

He quotes Aristotle to the effect that by travel you may observe that every man is really akin and friendly to every other man, and returned to Oxford to use forthwith in debates and conversation his newly acquired lore concerning Concordats and the like, and to conceive a Catholic activity in England as inspiring and as self-sacrificing as what he had learnt about from the French.

Amid these visions, the summer term floated by, serene once more.

During it Plater decided that the long vacation would be the proper time for him to learn German, and obtained leave to spend it at Exaaten in Holland, where the German Jesuits, forbidden to live by large groups in their own country, had a house. Besides, he had a great friend in Father Raijmaeckers, and in Father Leopold Willaert, of the Dutch and Belgian Provinces, both of whom he looked forward to meeting once more.

He started on June 30 by way of Canterbury, where he spent a few hours to the rapturous delight of innumerable friends, and crossed to Ostend by the night boat. He makes friends with everyone he meets, and to all applies the same adjective. He talks on that short journey to "interesting sailors—Catholic Belgians," to an "interesting Austrian journalist and art-critic," "a languid youth with an interesting face" and so marked a drawl that he was at once revealed as coming from Oxford, and finally, an Irish priest.

At Brussels he inspects two Colleges, and at one

“spoke at some length and with much energy” to a commercial class, “showing the advantages of a Catholic commercial body and contrasting the English shortcomings in this respect.”

By Liège he went to Maestricht and there in fact met Father Raijmaeckers, an ideal man for displaying to Charles Plater the superb Catholic organization of Holland. However, German and Greats work kept him too busy for much else; he makes no expeditions save in the neighbourhood. But he ends by being able to parody Heine in German, and to sing his verses to the accompaniment of a cardboard 'cello at a vacation concert. Plater had an extraordinary knack of humming exactly like a 'cello. He could let it sound absurd, and could make it seem quite beautiful.

On August 16 he received minor orders, and notes that he had an hour's most interesting talk with the Provincial. “I have never met such a man; perfectly magnificent, with a mind as broad as Salisbury Plain and a vast sense of humour.”

On August 22 he went to Louvain to make his retreat in the enormous house of theology and philosophy in the rue des Récollets. Here he met, as he had hoped, Father Willaert, to whose guidance during the days that followed the retreat he owed more than he guessed, at the time at any rate. Not only did he see, for the first time, at Xhovémont, a house specially set apart for retreats, but he was shown more than one Catholic institution of directly social importance, and he was permanently impressed. Thus, after a visit to the Louvain Ecole Ménagère he writes:

“A perfectly marvellous institution for the education of

middle-class girls. They pay about £10 a year and are kept, fed, and splendidly educated for technical trades—dress-making, dairy-work, and goodness knows what. There are over 100 nuns and about 1,100 girls. The whole place is a marvel of clever organization—wonderful schoolrooms—airy, spacious, and light—excellently arranged workshops, etc. etc.”

He was particularly pleased, too, by the catechism class of about fifty small boys, governed by P. Gilles, now editor of the *Catholic Herald of India*, for whom Father Plater was to write, almost as his last work, several articles in 1920; while to his great friend Mr. G. Gallagher, S.J., he wrote: “I am quite mad on the subject of the Belgian retreats for working-men. It’s really unspeakable—the cure for all our troubles, I’m sure: results really miraculous.”

A lot of music, both at Louvain and at Exaaten, whither he returned for the rest of the vacation, solaced his nerves, which were, however, in no good condition. He notes down a symptom which was more significant than he knew: the seemingly spontaneous up-gush, in his auditory imagination, of quite meaningless tags, usually in Greek and German mixed, and in hexameter rhythm. These echoed and re-echoed in his brain; and all his life, I think, vague sounds of bells and of tunes that just eluded capture haunted and harassed him. Certainly in his last year or two, I used to judge the level of his fatigue not least by the intensity of this experience, and he would yield to advice that he must take time off when it became acute, because it frightened him.

He went back to England on the night of the 29th, in the company of the editor of the Berlin *Nationalzeitung*, to whom he “gave all the Tyrrell I knew,”

since at that time Father Tyrrell had not yet divorced himself from orthodoxy, and was a favourite author of Charles Plater's.

The next term included two essays and about fifteen lectures a week, and the vacation at Manresa did not really rest him, despite two delightful days at Canterbury and some visits to the Wimbledon Army students. During the following term I was absent, and I can collect no details about it save that it was now that he definitely settled to take the Mycenæan Age as a special subject for Greats, and was inspired by Professor Gilbert Murray to aim at linking up Catholic missionaries with learned bodies such as the Anthropological Institute. This gave an orientation to his work which followed his time at Oxford.

This was drawing rapidly to a close: the summer term of 1904 was his last.

It was shadowed throughout by the imminent examination, which began on June 2, and on June 21 Charles Plater left Oxford for Manresa. But before I relate the next part of his life, I ought, I think, to join to this one an account of a journey he now made to France in order to collate a manuscript of Statius in the Bibliothèque Nationale for his friend Mr. Garrod, who was editing that poet.

He repaired to the Jesuit house at Canterbury on the evening of July 26, and spent the next day getting introductions to people of interest in Paris. He was particularly glad to meet Père Penfentenyo, and was able now to appreciate better his zeal for social work and especially the retreat movement, of which I give more details below. He crossed by the night boat to France, and broke the journey to Paris at Amiens, where he inspected the Cathedral

and heard Mass. Fate was as ever kind, and put in his path two English artists, Messrs. Ramsden and Carr, who afterwards, he adds, designed a monstrance for Westminster Cathedral. Thus he could contemplate the slender, soaring beauty of Amiens with instructed eyes. He reached Paris at 11, and went to the pathetic flat where a fragment of the rue de Sèvres community had packed itself. He started work next day at the Nationale and made up for five hours of unfamiliar grind at ancient MSS.—he managed 200 lines only, this first day—by writing a “Letter from Paris” to the *Catholic Weekly*. Next day he finished the first book of the Thebaid, and thereafter this part of his work progressed rapidly. He was much assisted by Père Doizé, who had himself followed the courses of the Ecole des Chartes, and was able to point out the various hands and their dates, in the MSS. that Plater was collating, in a way that excited his admiration. He was thus able to correct not only detail but a whole view, made current by Kohlmann, of the family to which the manuscript belonged. But for these technicalities I refer to Mr. Garrod’s edition of Statius, where due acknowledgements are made in the preface.

He did his best to visit Paris, despite the heat, which quite exhausted him, and succumbed to the fascination of the Morgue, then still open to the strolling visitor. He was shocked at the ghastly exhibition, but even more at the behaviour of the onlookers, women and children and vendors of cream tarts. However, the French officialdom ended by being shocked itself; and the lure of corruption, on which even Plato comments, is removed from the casual eye. Happier spectacles

were possible for him. He twice visited the *Missions Etrangères* in the rue du Bac, first to see the amazing collection of the relics of the priests of that society who have been martyred, and again for the grave ceremony which precedes the departure of missionaries for pagan lands. It is known that this Missionary Society makes a promise that, having gone, its missionaries will not return, and the *Cantique des Adieux* is correspondingly impressive. The feet of the evangelists are kissed, the embrace is given, and Charles Plater, as he gave it that day, asked each young Frenchman to pray for the conversion of England to the Faith. He made two visits to the basilica of Montmartre, and on Sunday the 14th went up to spend the night there. Directly he knelt down he felt faint, and from other symptoms it is clear that he was considerably over-tiring himself during this trip. However, he recovered, and was able to do his part in the nocturnal Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, which is always exposed there. He was profoundly moved by the great crowd of worshippers, among whom he remarked so many working-men; and he went next morning, "very stiff," to hear Mass in the old chapel where St. Ignatius and his first companions took their vows. In fact, he was privileged to assist at the taking of his vows by a Jesuit priest, and served the Mass himself. So he felt linked, with extreme intimacy, to the historical origins of the Society of Jesus.

However, he was occupied chiefly in making friends with very modern people and in inspecting the works of the hour. Among persons the first rank must be given, I think, to the abbé Dimnet, ■ most brilliant littérateur who was, about that time,

a valued contributor to the *Pilot*, and is best known in our country by his English *tour de force*, *France Herself Again*.

"I was perfectly at home in thirty seconds. He is ■ superlatively charming man and speaks English perfectly. . . . I stopped chatting with him for an hour."

The visit repeated itself as often as was possible in the couple of days at the abbé's disposal—he was leaving for Switzerland almost immediately—and they went together to see the abbé Bricout, editor of the *Revue du Clergé Français*. Then they went to the station and stood exchanging courtesies on the platform. "You are the nicest Jesuit I know." "You, quite the most charming abbé." "And so, the last of the dearest of abbés." It was not, luckily, "the last." They often met again near Stonyhurst.

Another acquaintance, made at the Nationale, was the famous Dom Morin, O.S.B., who was able to give the Englishman not only of the fruits of his historical and archæological knowledge, but much information about the various currents of thought and tendency that were then agitating, if not bewildering, the Catholic world. These things are often seen in a better prospective abroad than in England, and England herself looks different, from France or Italy, to an Englishman who is not a bigot. I have always felt glad that Plater, in France, met not only men who were absorbed in active work, but a Dom Morin who could help him towards some directive ideas which he could use, as he did, long afterwards. It is amusing to see, from his diary, that he now and again thought he "knew better," and had "heard the other side of the

question." It remains that this and one or two similar encounters combined to provide him with a more European outlook, and his own criticisms peeled off him. He retained, moreover, all his life the conviction that the liturgy was likely to be a more valuable instrument of propaganda than any amount of vernacular innovations, and relics of Dom Morin's conversations are discernible in what he used himself to say when Rector of Oxford.

He met, too, Dom Cabrol, and established affectionate relations.

But I need scarcely say that his main interest went inevitably to those who could inform him about social affairs. He visited the *Conférence Olivaint* with Père Lauras, its Director, and inspected, with P. Aucler, the Headquarters of the *Jeunesse Catholique*; but above all he rejoiced in an introduction, obtained through the abbé Dimnet, to the "most interesting young man in France," M. Marc Sangnier. This was the creator of the Sillon, an organization for social reform of which the enthusiasm and spirit of self-sacrifice were literally beyond praise. For, when in doctrine it at least seemed to imply that you could not be a true Catholic unless you adhered to a scheme of democratic politics so advanced as to be thought by many to be socialist, and in practice was so independent as to seem detached from all episcopal supervision, it loyally laid down its own life at the bidding of Rome, and renewed itself in a form less likely to suggest indiscreet fervour or confused ideals. We may safely say that the young republican found not the least bitter of his enemies among those who dreamt that the Church was the hereditary ally of a Throne, and royalism, here too, cut across much healthy

Catholic enterprise, and even drove the more hot-headed reformers into the excesses of their qualities.

More substantially valuable was Plater's visit to the House of Retreats at Epinay. He found there two retreats in full swing, attended by some ninety-five working-men. He went to the "points" or explanations of the various meditations which are the staple part of a retreat, and afterwards called on Père Pupey-Girard, who had begun to organize such retreats even before he was ordained priest, an example by which the young Englishman was not slow to wish to profit. He learnt from that remarkable and inventive man two points especially: how to set about getting recruits and how to organize retreat centres. This was to become one of the controlling memories of his life, and his work, even at its seemingly most haphazard, was never lacking in the method of which he now acquired the structural elements.

We shall not be wrong, then, in regarding this visit to France, paid for the sake of collating an ancient manuscript for the use of some one else's edition of a second-rate poet, as a turning-point in Charles Plater's career, or at least as clinching the effect made upon him by his visits to Canterbury, to Holland, and Belgium. He was still youthfully intolerant, and the discreet intervention of his hosts was now and again needed to obliterate his too frequent use of words like "stagnation" or "behind the times." It was better that they should upset his wine-glass at dinner than that he should upset the nerves of theologians, destined to eminence, near whom he might be seated. But a real sense of friendliness pervades his diary, and his most sympathetic appreciation of what he was shown, his

will to learn, his courageous geniality—for his French was always sketchy, though he never failed to hurl himself into talk, nor to be understood and to understand—he even taught a crowd of small Parisian bakers' boys, at the *Cercle des petits Marmitons*, how to play Snap¹—left a delightful impression on the minds of those French fathers who, with such indomitable gaiety and pluck, were facing even greater difficulties than any that Charles was to confront.

He returned to England very tired, but very happy, and full of schemes concerning which he forthwith flooded the Catholic press with vivacious articles.

What, then, had Charles Plater gained from the years spent in Oxford itself?

Much, in many ways. First, he had been put to an enormous mass of work—literary, historical, and philosophical. With his untiring energy, he would

¹ I think that the following letter, textually reproduced, will lend some vivacity to this incident.

“PARIS,
le 12 Septembre 1904.

“MONSIEUR,

“Nous sommes bien content d'avoir de vos nouvelles. Vous nous demandé si on va bien je vous remercie beaucoup somme en bonne santé. On s'amuse très bien au cercle jeudi dernier on nous a fait voir des productions [*scil.* projections] de notre Seigneur Jésus Christ on continue toujours a joué au carte a sept avons des petit camarade. On travaille toujours bien on commence le matin a 7 heures et on fini en se moment si vers 8½ du soir. On est bien couché et nourri. On est plus nombreux que quante vous été venu. Tout le monde s'amuse beaucoup.

“Je ne plus rien a vous dire que tous le monde se porte bien et vous souhaité bien le bonjour.

“Salutations.

“L. M.”

probably have done as much elsewhere, but with far less method. It is true that he was the better able to use the material provided to him by Oxford, because his scholastic training had taught him to appreciate method when he saw it. Oxford challenged him to apply it to many other fields besides that of abstract thought ; and he remained determined to use method in his work, and did so far more than was thought by many to whom he appeared a man of violent enthusiasms but of dissipated energy, and who judged the condition of his mind by that of his room. In particular, he did vigorous work in one special and recondite department of archæology ; and this sharpened and trained in him the power of criticizing and of making constructive use of evidence. The results of this general and specialist training alike are visible, first, in his theological notebooks, and again, in his ability to reach a wide view of the influences expressed in historical fact, and those in particular of European history ; and to fill up this outline with properly selected details ; to know what to look for, and to disengage the essential from the mass of the superfluous.

He received, besides, a vigorous castigation of his literary sense and learnt to distrust fluency and phrases, so that he could write good and clear English when he chose, and did write clear English always ; and when, later, he still adopted a style that would have filled academic Oxford with horror, he knew what he was doing, and was able to make his words not only a vehicle for his thought, but a vehicle which, as he would have said, "got there." He knew the right way to say what he wanted to say, in the circumstances. Hence he was not ineffective, as an Oxford don might be who should fastidiously

carry the dialect of a graceful essayist into a public meeting.

At the same time, he learnt that he would never be a scholar—never, that is, in the sense that implies chiefly a knowledge of minutiae or a narrow specialism. He was, no doubt, to be some sort of specialist; it was astonishing how few were the ideas he was destined to use, and how no more than sufficient were the facts he employed to embody them. But you cannot, at any rate, picture Charles Plater as regretfully *renouncing* the vocation to sit at a desk and compile a monumental tome. He knew that was not for him, and did not want it to be. This assisted what should anyhow be a product of a thorough university training, namely, though it sound paradoxical, true modesty. Oxford may allow this quality to degenerate into its caricature—a mincing, non-committal diffidence. Plater was far more diffident than many folks, who saw only his prodigious aplomb, imagined; and though he once ran the risk of being over-assertive and reckless, he fell final victim to neither of these two extremes, but retained a modesty of mind which had a true sweetness and beauty.

Above all, Oxford taught him what else he might have learnt less well, how to mix with men. He came across so many men, of such different types, half of whom were, however, in their own department, quite first-rate, that he saw a great deal of "what was in man," appreciated it, and guessed the rest. He learnt to combine extreme adaptability with tenacity of ideal; he remained flexible, but never became complaisant. In this he was able to use the manifold suggestion of Oxford better than those who arrive there without any fixed principles

or standards, and possibly never gain them in those inconclusive schools. He could afford to become all things to all men, because he was so definitely himself.

Yet, as I said, he matured marvellously, both by the training of Oxford and by that of the countries he visited while he was an undergraduate. Oxford will not be jealous: she likes her sons to travel; it is part of her education to tell them to go away from her, certain that they will return. Charles, at Oxford and away from it, looked always for what was worthy to interest him, and so he always saw it, and grew in that direction.

And last of all, he prepared his own terrain. When he came back to Oxford as Head of Pope's Hall, many retained delightful memories of him; better, he knew what he was coming to, and lecture rooms, common rooms, and the ways of the place were all of them familiar to him. He was able at once to "adjust himself."

All this, however, took time to grow to perfection. When he went down from Oxford, he was still too much convinced, it may be, that the Tree of Life grew nowhere save on the banks of Isis.

Chapter V

AT ST. MARY'S HALL

September 1904—September 1907

"Say, lad, have you things to do ?

Quick, then, while your day's at prime.

Quick, and if there's work for two,

Here am I, man ; now's your time !"

A. E. HOUSMAN : *A Shropshire Lad.*

(i)

WHEN Charles Plater left Oxford, all the elements out of which his life was to be built up had become visible. They had by no means been properly disentangled from the enormous mass of what might be possible for him, nor had he acquired any sort of perspective, nor had he any experience to speak of. All this was, of course, natural. All the more necessary is it, I think, to break off here what has been scarcely more than a chronicle of events and moods to make clear the main tracks along which his thoughts, wishes, and activities were henceforward more and more definitely to go. We may thus get some sort of guiding line to help ourselves across the jungle of detail which might else blind our imagination, and above all, we shall be able to understand his motives and ideals and also the development of character which, under pressure from within and without, began so rapidly, hereafter, to go forward. On the rare occasions when Charles Plater had time to look backwards and to assess the distance covered, and to wonder at the inside work which the outside work had produced within himself, he said what I feel warrants my belief that in these pages, which

necessarily contain more of my own impressions, I shall not misrepresent him.

When Plater began to go about talking of "social work," people were apt to think, I remember, that he had started this new interest because he found it easier than his "proper" work of classics. Also, because he got on so well with everyone. When he got second classes in his two Oxford examinations, few had the strength of mind to refrain from the formula "I told you so." And they had some excuse. For that Charles should not get Firsts when other people did, seemed inconceivable if he had not positively chucked away his chances. In any case, the idea of what was meant by social work was, among his associates at that time, of the vaguest. It suggested anything from slumming to whist drives. Nor was he able to give any very clear idea of it himself, for quite a long time. How should he, since his own mind was so far from formed about the whole matter? He was seen to be constantly rushing about, visiting all sorts of people, talking glibly about journals, institutions, schemes, that no one else had so much as heard of, or which seemed, at any rate, quite off the beat of so young a man, especially as he was not yet a priest.

This, then, was a period of much throwing of cold water, if not at the hands of those who were really in a position to permit or to prohibit—for I think I can fairly say that the highest officials, who see more of the general situation than their more talkative subordinates, were very seldom discouraging—at least of those of whose murmurous voices around him he could not be unaware. So it must never be thought that Charles Plater had no difficulties in life. I do not know what would have

become of him had he had none. Neither would he have been grateful for a primrose path. He had no doubt but that if the Christian does not go up Calvary, he goes nowhere. Criticism was his, therefore, in generous measure, especially on the part of those who had neither ability nor desire to share his enterprises. The cold water came down, normally in a drizzle, at times in bucketsful. Nor must it be assumed that he went about fully equipped with a temperamental mackintosh, umbrella, and goloshes. He was often drenched to the skin. Charles Plater was far more sensitive, more shy, even, than on-lookers might suppose. He, who was to grow so intuitively aware of what others were feeling, could never have become so had he not himself first experienced most of the possibilities of spiritual nerves. His emotionalism was not everything. It *can* be nearly everything in a man or a woman; it can go with extremest selfishness. But in him it was a symptom of a much deeper reaction; a spiritual sympathy with what was spiritual in those with whom he came in contact, whether as individuals or as groups. He felt, then, fully the snubs, the checks, the polite surprises, the chill charitableness of which he got so much. He experienced the unforgivable applause of middle age, which gives a young man to understand that his enthusiasms are indeed admirable, but then, they *are* a young man's. "We had them in our time; everybody has them: wait till you are forty."

Drenched, then, to the skin he often was. Why not chilled to the bone? Because of a certain interior source of warmth which drove the paralysing influences off. What, then, was this? Nothing, we may believe, but the grace and the vocation of

God, sufficiently responded to by qualities adequate to respond.

And now that I have said this, I can more safely say that the critics had something on their side. Charles Plater was undoubtedly stimulated by his "social" successes, in the sense in which "social" is not used, for the most part, in this book. How should he not have been? What young man could resist altogether that powerful form of flattery? And he undoubtedly sought escapes from the strain and the drudgery of his normal work. Indeed, it was good that he should have them. Mycenæan archæology was such an escape, and on the whole it reacted favourably on the rest of his work, because it kept him fresher. More important than this was the fact that he did not fully know as yet what social work implied. Is it not since the war, for example, that the nation at large has begun to realize that the real social work has to be done *with* Labour, and not merely *for* it? Charles Plater was to have the merit of guessing that before a good many people, but he most certainly had not grasped it fully yet. His own temperament, and the kind of person he was fortunate enough to meet with, made it impossible for him to be merely quiescent, to have merely parochial plans, and to narrow his horizon to the improvement of the individual. But neither temperament nor inspiring associates could save him from the intolerance of ardent youth, which wants to know why everyone is not up and doing; which wants to see, on the instant, concrete results, which cannot prevent itself half hinting that its elders are idling or out of date.

Hence, at first, his passion for organizing. He

never lost it, but it became less precipitate, and allowed for a lengthier laying of foundation stones, especially spiritual. I do not mean religious, exactly, but the creation of an attitude of mind which must precede activity of will if this is to last. To the end of his life he was accustomed when some new idea was suggested to seize a piece of paper; to write, in his beautiful script, at its head: *Plan* or *Scheme for a Catholic Colony*, or what not; underline it firmly, add Paragraph I, and then sit blinking at it, but very happy. The written scheme might never get beyond that, but the idea had begun to incarnate itself, and he felt that it would soon begin to "forge ahead." "Practical social work" was, then, his first preoccupation, almost wholly. "Let us get something going." And when he urged this on young men who had other work to do, and when he could not give a really clear statement of what he wanted done, it was not liked, and he was told that he must wait.

There are here three points that I should like to make.

First, his ambition was the genuine stuff. He was *not* stale at 40. He never was a cynic. The thing in him, whatever it was, held good. It did not die out; it was not killed out. Boyish enthusiasm, as much as you like; but boys may be robust, and anyhow you have to begin by being one. It is no crime, nor even a misfortune. A swollen head is better than no head; even, than an empty one. And his was never exactly swollen. It was, as a matter of fact, simply bursting with ideas, and if he had not wanted to put them into effect his critics would quite as readily have said: "But

what is the practical outcome of all this talk ? What does he want us to do ? ”

He wanted to do, as I said, too much. His eyes were fixed on what it is always easiest to see first : the institutional aspect of the Church's work ; all that the French mean by the untranslatable word *œuvres*. All boys ought to like making things. Plater returned from his Continental experiences keen on making all sorts of things, or at least on getting more “ go ” into what existed. The miners' allotments at Saint-Etienne ; the work done at Paris on so large and organized a way for newspaper boys, for sweeps, for acrobats, had fired his imagination and he wanted to see England full of new creations. He wanted to see St. Vincent de Paul's society filled with more of the spirit of Ozanam. Above all he was at first spellbound by the idea of settlements. He did not yet clearly distinguish between the academic, half-patronizing way in which Settlements too often tend to be run, and what he would afterwards have recognized as their true and useful spirit. He was full of the idea of getting men to “ go down ” and “ live among ” the poor, without seeing that Christ demanded something more, so to say, incarnational ; that the Word not only pitched His tent among us, but was *made flesh*. He gave me the task of collecting all information of such settlements as the public schools had created, and he was eager to see Catholic effort rivalling these.

It will be noticed that the whole field of his interest was by now other than “ intellectual.” I do not mean that he despised the intellect, nor that he could not turn to intellectual account what he had acquired at Oxford, when duty called for

that. But he was looking far afield ; and if he did not yet realize the numbers and the life of the working classes, he was at least anxious to do something for those who seemed to be left out. One thing especially, I remember, horrified him. This was the leakage of Catholics from the Church. It was calculated that about 15,000 children were lost to the Faith yearly. This became a nightmare to him, as it must to all who can visualize that sort of thing ; and Charles was almost too good at visualizing. He regarded the Church as dying in innumerable parts of her organism, and he instantly felt that every single Catholic had the direct and primary duty of flinging him or herself into the fray and saving souls.

He was also beginning to feel that the conditions of life for many millions were intolerable. Sweated labour was a subject he could not tire of. He read and re-read Mr. Whiteing's *No. Five John Street*, and began to form lists of such books, which should touch the imagination as well as supply information. But he was far from the depth of pity which later on engulfed him. He was horror-struck, excited, rather than profoundly or persistently moved.

To digress for a moment. The same relative shallowness appeared in his whole way of feeling and showing friendliness, and in his appropriation of the virtue of charity. He was, at that time, fond of the word "poisonous." It did not mean much upon his lips ; still, "So and so, a poisonous man" sounded pretty severe, and certainly meant that he did not like him at all. Later, he would scarcely have used it about persons, but at the worst, of groups ; thus : "Sermon fine ; choir poisonous." When he did not like a man he would come to

write, I dare say : " Mr. X, whom I love not," and this would mean that the feeling was at once deeper and better under control. " Father X is not optimistic about retreats " would, I think, mean that he had received a really sharp rebuff. " Mr. Y extended a limp hand " meant that Mr. Y had been really unkind. He would never allow himself real harshness, but came to feel that what was really wrong lay too deep for mere recrimination, while what was trivially unkind or unpleasant he would not spend time over, but went rapidly on to the next thing. On the other hand, he scatters adjectives of affection and admiration always more frequently, yet with sincerity. You might be apt to think that he could not possibly think so well of people as all that, but he did ; and his diaries show just the same advance. Especially the word " dear " occurs more and more frequently. " The dear Australian. " " My dear Canon M. was there. " " I caught sight of—joy ! the dear M. L., who had walked over to see me. " " A fine man—an excellent priest—a glorious crowd. " This ebullient good-will became a symptom of a deep and beautiful affection ; but I must insist that as yet it was not fully there, and indeed was not likely to be ; for depth of general affection, or a warm yet wise affection, is not, I suppose, a young man's virtue. The result is, that the spirit in which he went about his social work in those days was not so pure nor so lofty nor yet so fully human nor so intimately tender as it was when the world began to know him, and in consequence it was not so attractive, and his energies ruffled not a few, and his ideals were more crude and so concrete as to seem almost cheap. But the roots of pity and under-

standing were there, and those years held all the future in fee.

He wisely decided, however, to find out all he could about what was actually in existence at home and abroad, before he made up his mind as to what most needed to be initiated, eager as he was to start doing something without any delay at all. This explains why his first organized publications, after leaving Oxford, will deal with Catholic enterprises and organizations already to hand. Next, he will arrange for a survey of what is being done on the Continent. He will preface even this by a real effort to obtain, at least in sufficient outline, a view of the political and social situation in other countries, lest his idea of what the Church could do, and therefore should do, might be false.

But from the very outset he required no one to teach him that the work to be done was so vast that the clergy alone could not possibly cope with it, even were it considered desirable that they should do so. Indeed, he was clear that Catholic work was certainly not the affair of the clergy alone. He constantly repeated a dictum of the Bishop of Salford, that this century would be known as the century of the laity, and he made much use of the excellent little book called *Fortifying the Layman*, by Father E. Hull, editor of the *Bombay Examiner*. His mind definitely turned then to the interesting of the laity in active Catholic work, and to the selection of such parts of the Catholic Crusade in which they could be expected and invited to take a vigorous share. Clearly this would not fall within the limits of the financial or devotional merely, or of what is habitually known as Charity. Another

phrase often on his lips at this time was : " It's not your charity we want. . . . "

This by itself was enough to make him foresee the need of serious study ; for such a statement suggests a problem. If not charity, what then ? How far he foresaw the development of study clubs, I cannot recall. He certainly had them on his horizon, for he asked me even then to compile for him a pamphlet which should be called *Study Clubs for Working-men*, and it was, in fact, produced by the C.T.S. Nor do I think he realized as yet the rôle to be played by women in the Church's forward move in England or the world. The elements of the Catholic Women's League were all extant, but in solution, as it were ; directly its creation was mooted, and its foundations laid, he was able without any delay to give it his whole-hearted and intelligent sympathy.

He further saw that much of his ideal was so unfamiliar to English Catholics in general that a tremendous pressure would have to be brought to bear upon public opinion if it were to have any chance of realization. His mind went forthwith to the Press ; and of existing periodicals, he chose the *Catholic Weekly*, as it was before its linking up with the *Universe*, and the *Catholic Times* as the organs through which he might best hope to affect a large public. Into these he at once began to pour articles.

I said that the grace and vocation of God were to be discerned from the very beginning of Charles Plater's career, and account for the development and fruitfulness of his efforts. A sign, in its turn, of this, I take to be that the idea of retreats accessible to all alike, was always in the essential texture of his plans. You may not only say that he always included retreats in his schemes, but his whole vision

of what was to be done dawned through what he had seen that retreats could do and did. What he saw of retreats proved the inspiration of what he saw must be done otherwise than by retreats, quite as much as retreats stood for him as a goal for all the rest when it should have been accomplished. Retreats taught him that Catholic men could be got together by their means for all sorts of Catholic work, and when they had been got together his dearest wish was to put them all back into a retreat house. Charles Plater was so convinced that a proper retreat was the supreme work in the Catholic Apostolate, and obviously the crowning work that a Jesuit could aspire to do, that it followed logically that nothing, however good, could be adequate as a substitute. A very little experience suffices to convince anyone of the same thing. It is simply because experience alone can make that clear that I resist the strong temptation to describe in detail what retreats are, and even to relate some of their history abroad. Space anyhow forbids this. I will confine myself to saying that to make a retreat according to the method of St. Ignatius involves retiring for a day, or two days, or a week, or more, from all the ordinary avocations of life; and spending the time in solitude and silence reflecting on the considerations which are put before you by the giver of the retreat. These deal with God, the soul, its destiny, and its true end or purpose. They aim at disentangling it from the illusions of evil or of the world, and of setting life on the path of true success, judged in the light of the issues of eternity. What being a Christian really means is put clearly before the soul's eye, and the whole Christian crusade is offered as a challenge fit for a man's most generous response.

The Life and Passion of Christ are passed in review, and a man emerges from his retreat not only convinced that his personal eternal welfare is the only matter of absolute import, but that his co-operation is possible and is asked in the vast enterprise of the world's salvation.

Charles Plater kept saying that it was no good to say, merely, what a retreat consisted of : almost, it was harmful to do so. For an outline such as I have hesitatingly given, might seem so superlatively unattractive as to decide any average man not to submit to any such incarceration. The only way to appreciate a retreat was to make one. However, a fuller idea of what retreats are and of how they are given, in all parts of the world, and of what their results are, can be obtained from Father Plater's own book, *Retreats for the People* (Sands, 1912), and to that I refer the reader, though we shall have occasion to say some more about them below. But to understand Father Plater's ideal, it is practically necessary that the book be read, and all the more important that it be brought up-to-date. It is, even as it stands, a book which has brought revelation to thousands all over the world, and cannot be allowed to die.

I must, however, add that even in this country Charles Plater did not actually invent the giving of retreats to those ill off for time or money. A zealous priest of south-east London had for years been giving bank-holiday retreats to members of the working-classes in Clapham, and had been praying for their development. Plater was not alone when the Catholic Social Guild was begun ; he found that many besides himself had been inspired by the same hopes ; perhaps no great work has been the creation

of one man only. But I shall be detracting from no one's due praise when I say that Charles Plater was, in this country, the chief apostle of the movement of retreats for working men and women. Never was he a mere philanthropist ; never a mere organizer ; never hallucinated by the machinery of welfare work, or by the material or educational advantages it might provide. He always kept God before his mind, and he was always sure that the special contribution of the Catholic Church to the world was a supernatural one, and that this overflowed into, rather than directly concerned itself with, the material well-bearing of the community. His hope was for citizens, but Catholic citizens. He wanted this world improved ; but primarily because he saw that if men could not live properly as sons of men, it was almost idle to expect them to profit by the call to become sons of God. He hoped " to build Jerusalem in England's green and pleasant land " ; but he had no doubt that the Holy City had its true origin in heaven, and thence came down to men.

Let us, then, think of Charles Plater, at this time when he had just left Oxford and was beginning in some sort his public career, as absorbed by the idea of stimulating the Catholic life of the country in every possible way ; and convinced that this Catholic life must be one of health in the very widest sense, and that the disinherited were to receive thought and affection which had hitherto been cruelly denied them, and that this implied a work in which the laity must join in a thousand active ways, and should descend into the most practical details as well as rise to an exact intellectual grasp of principles and aims ; a work which, none the less, would simply not be worth doing were it not animated by a super-

natural life, a life which could be drawn only from communion with God made Man for men.

(ii)

In the autumn following Charles Plater's departure from Oxford he was sent to St. Mary's Hall, Stonyhurst, to study his third year's work of philosophy, and also to teach classics to the small group of men who were preparing to go to Oxford.

There is no doubt that the first part of this programme was not to his taste. He felt that he had had as much study as he could assimilate, and that abstract thought was what he was less and less inclined for. He was, however, loyal, or meant to be, to his business of working at Ethics which remained to be done, and then of revising the whole three years' course of scholasticism. Indeed, during the next three years he went considerably further than he had any need to, and attended the lectures on physiology and biology which were innovations since his time, and which were to prove of the highest utility to him when, later on, he was put to teach psychology. His notes in these two departments of knowledge are as neat as ever and beautifully illustrated; they contain also some enchanting verses¹ describing the

¹ In kindly memory, I will quote a few lines on the *Monocystis agilis*:

“The next upon my little list
Is called the Agile Monocyst.
A parasitic beast is he,
And feeds on worms' vesiculæ.
He has a cuticle, and so,
He cannot, like the Amœba, flow . . .
A fact that everybody knows is,
He takes his dinner by osmosis.”

And so on, for pages. A quite wise folly.

structure and habits of *amœbæ* and the like, of which even his grandmother's talent might have been proud. They were real aids to memory, and amused whole classesful at a time. He became, too, quite an expert at dissection.

He ultimately passed his final examination in "All Philosophy" to everyone's satisfaction, but could not prevent himself sighing :

"I would give all the little philosophy I know to be able to sing comic songs as X does."

As for his teaching of the Oxford class, results prove the value of his method. His men all, I find, did well, whether they went to Oxford or not. It was characteristic that, as soon as possible, he began to make the "Oxford room" attractive. He created a really useful library, hung the walls with pictures, and instituted window-curtains. The room developed an individuality which suggested that the work done in it was bound to have one too. He also resolved that his men should work co-operatively. He made small groups, and parcelled out work among them, and they had to teach it to one another. But what was undoubtedly new was the interest he began to inspire for archæology, especially Mycenæan. He brought out a number of the Blandyke papers entirely devoted to this subject, and beautifully illustrated. Better still, he accepted Mr. Myres's invitation to set his class to some original research on a point of Homeric criticism ; but I do not know how this scheme prospered. He undertook, too, some excavations at Ribchester, and uncovered many Roman relics in that ancient ground, and urged that more history was taught by an hour of this sort of

work than by a week of lectures. He would have liked to make a "local museum," and rejoiced when, later on, his cousin, Miss E. Harting, took a leading part in creating just such a museum at Weybridge. There were few churches or manors in the neighbourhood of Stonyhurst, so rich in very ancient relics, that he did not visit.

He proceeded to link up this line of investigation with directly anthropological research, as had been suggested to him at Oxford. The Foreign Missions provided an inexhaustible field for observation. He drew up one of those questionnaires of which he afterwards became so fond, and sent it out to a number of priests and others whose work lay among "uncivilized" folks. Not a little disappointment attended his efforts. It was rarely possible to get the kind of answer he wanted. The notion of studying scientifically the tribes among whom they were working was unfamiliar to the missionaries, and answers dictated by piety or theology, rather than by direct observation on the lines laid down, came back to the Anthropological Bureau. Perhaps Charles had not made clear enough how the work of conversion itself would be facilitated, if it were approached *also* from the end, so to say, of the destined neophyte. But he would have appeared to be instructing the wise, and he avoided that. Yet some solid work was done, as well as inspiration given and horizons enlarged. The *Athenæum*, and special bulletins, spoke with high praise of the work done by the Bureau and at Ribchester; and it is a pity that it was not taken up and continued by some one whose hands were freer. Indeed, Charles Plater could hardly have intended to put so heavy a piece of work upon the shoulders of young men so fully

occupied already as the students of St. Mary's Hall are ; and perhaps he was not himself sufficiently convinced of the essential importance of the enterprise, and so, though he had willing collaborators, soon after his departure the work collapsed. It was not his true vocation. When he was convinced, he did work that lasted, for he transmitted his conviction.

Not all alike, however, displayed an aptitude towards this rather recondite field of study. The more " practical " minds he tried to lead towards literature, or at any rate to journalism. He did not very much care on what subject a man wrote, provided he did write. I take almost at haphazard the names of some articles he inspired, corrected, and dispatched to various periodicals, especially those I mentioned : Father Perry, the astronomer ; Charles Waterton, the naturalist ; Women's Work in France ; O'Connell ; Evolution ; Father Bans's Homes ; Brunetière ; the Preston Guilds, and so forth. For the better management of this he formed a Writers' Club, over which he presided. This also ceased to exist after he left St. Mary's Hall, though it continued its career for a while under other guidance.

His own writing was more heterogeneous than afterwards, and included the reviewing of a good many classical books ; but towards the middle of 1906 you can see that his interests have crystallized. At the Catholic Truth Society Conference, held at Brighton in the September of that year, a paper was read, not indeed by him in person, but written by him, on what he was to acknowledge, later, to be his " life's work "—" Retreats for Working-men." And he had already begun that persistent agitation

for the creation of a house which should be definitely set apart for this purpose, that ended in the official sanction of his idea and its realization in the concrete. It must not, even here, be supposed that all was plain sailing. I remember very well how sharply he was criticized by some in whom he was to find his firmest friends, for what was called his "pushfulness." "If allowed," Father Purbrick wrote to him, "and I hope you may be, read your paper at the Brighton Conference. Let no man despise your youth. You are old enough to be a Bishop. My motto in such things is *Noli Extinguere Spiritum*. If you proposed to lecture on the best methods to be adopted in giving retreats, I should say, Don't; but my imagination has not compassed such a design on your part." But owing to a fear lest the intoxication of publicity should lay hold of him, he was not allowed to read his Brighton paper himself. It was felt that to make any such suggestion was a priest's work, and not for so young a man. It was an acute disappointment to him to be thus precluded from going to the Conference, but never once did I hear from him a word of annoyance or recrimination, and from his diary you would not even guess that he had wanted to go.

It was at the same Conference that the pamphlet proposing the creation of the Catholic Women's League was circulated; this provoked at the outset a more positive opposition than the suggestion of retreats did, but from the very first Charles Plater saw the virtues of the plan and never ceased to support it in every way.

As for his general interest in the social welfare of his generation, he was developing this more by conversations than by personal experience of the

appalling conditions of life in which so many millions lived. The Continent, however, had taught him what to look for, and he was horror-struck to see how little of it was being recognized in England.

After a lecture he writes :

“ Father X very interesting on Socialism. He is at B., where it is rampant. The priests seem to have no idea of ‘going one better.’ He said that Catholic clubs which were merely places of amusement soon got out of hand, rebelled against the priest, grew socialistic and did harm. He agreed that an educated laity are needed to give these places a social turn. None such, or few, are to be found, e.g., young Z at [one of our leading Catholic Colleges] is no use, and his family are like him. Motors, and general disdain of parish work. . . . A grave danger ! ”

But Plater derived great positive assistance from Father T. Finlay, of Dublin, who gave the Stonyhurst retreat in 1906, and followed it up with an hour and a half's talk on the need of social work, and on how much it was in keeping with the idea of St. Ignatius. From this time forward Plater felt he had received a true sanction, and never hesitated to urge his point of view.

During these years he neglected his log a good deal, and it is harder to describe them without drawing too much on memory or on impressions collected from a few scraps. He entirely dropped his diary from his arrival at St. Mary's Hall till the last day of August 1905, that is, for fifteen months ; then he rouses himself, and writes a whole page ; then two-thirds of a page on January 1, one-third on the 2nd, then no more till August 14. The diary continues, with wide gaps, till the Easter Sunday of 1907, and is resumed no more till he goes to St. Beuno's.

I must ask, then, to be trusted when I say that during this period he was only moderately happy, and try to explain why this was so.

To start with, he was often seriously unwell. He had what looked like bad heart attacks ; though they were not that, for there was nothing organically wrong with his heart then or later : these violent crises of nerves and indigestion were agonizing to endure and alarming to witness. They were quite different from what he had to undergo in later life, when there was very little pain. However, he was persuaded, when at St. Mary's Hall, that he might die at any moment, and though his superior of those days, Father M. Maher, is himself dead, and I cannot ask him, I think that had Charles Plater not been, constitutionally, a very strong man, he might indeed have been unable to support these recurrent shocks, with their legacy of extreme fatigue and depression of mind.

Besides this, and in part accounting for it, he knew that he was being very severely criticized. It was certainly said that he was neglecting his own work, which was to teach classics and prepare his examination, for the sake of a hundred other things. He in fact rebuked himself, not indeed for neglecting the Oxford class collectively—for it could not usefully have been asked to do more work than it was already doing—but for not seeing each man more often and more intimately on directly classical subjects. Some of his class themselves felt this, and also that with all his other interests he could not possibly be preparing his lectures adequately. In this, I think, they may have been wrong. Apart from the fact that private tutoring would have had to be initiated by him at St. Mary's Hall,

where it was not in vogue, he knew he was not very good at what made the staple of the Oxford class work, compositions and so forth, and wrote to friends for fair copies that he could not make himself. I suppose too that a man may be forgiven if he teaches by preference what he feels he is best at; and though it had certainly not been usual for an Oxford class to do Plato's *Republic* and Aristotle's *Ethics*, I think that his men will have gained a very great deal by reading these with him, especially as their philosophical work was scholastic and made many points of contact.

That he could not be doing his work properly was then a view as natural as it was mistaken. For at that time no one had the least idea of the amount of work he exacted of himself. Perhaps some of his confrères did not even guess—for they were still young—that it was possible to do that amount. But to some he was a revelation, and almost too violent a stimulus.

I could not tell how far he was conscious of the impression he was making on others. For some adored him; others were swept up, almost against their will, in his streaming energy; others cordially disliked him. It would be idle not to say that, especially as it affords an opportunity of explaining what always, though to a dwindling extent, stood in his way. You would be told: "If he has no use for us, he ignores us: he simply doesn't see us; he looks through us." "He makes himself very pleasant to the collaborator of the moment and drops him directly he has finished with him. He only talks to others than the elect when there's no one else to talk to."

This was the caricature of a truth. Plater provided,

by his exterior mannerisms, the excuse for so inadequate a verdict. In so far as the verdict was meant to extend to his interior life, it was almost quite erroneous. Charles was very timid of people who, he thought, disliked him, and was awkward in their presence. He was almost morbidly sensitive to lack of sympathy, and at times, I confess, glided away from criticism in a panic and sought approvals. Then he was, all will agree, extremely absent-minded, even when he had no enthralling interest to occupy him; when he had, his unawareness of his environment became complete. He was now finding himself for the first time equipped with a great number of things to do, and, what was more, with the possibility of applying his principle of making others do them too. He was so preoccupied with these things and persons that nothing else could find room. The world became invisible except in patches. This most certainly did not mean that he disesteemed any one of his confrères. Quite the contrary; he loved them, and the diary shows that he would have gone any distance to see the *Private Secretary* acted, as it was, by students to whom he was very devoted, though they were by no means of the enthusiastic group of his collaborators, while he owns that he would not have crossed the road to see it done by professionals.

But it is no less true that he had not yet learnt how to be energetic gently. He feels—how could he help it?—his personality; continually he exhorts himself not to “boss” people; he rebukes himself for “sulks” when he fails to meet response. He wants to be “in the limelight”; to be “petted”; to be “everywhere at once.” Ill-managed activity I will admit almost to any extent

a critic may ask ; also an unconscious attraction of events and enterprises to himself as their control, if not their origin. I will confess to having drawn extreme amusement, later on, from watching him appropriate persons or works to the surprise and even indignation of his victims. But I will never admit that there was in him more than a school-boy's conceit—and remember that it had come to be taken for granted among his enthusiastic admirers that this miraculous young man had only to appear for things to “begin to happen,” and, what was perfectly true, that he could not ever do anything in the ordinary way—nor that he was uncharitable, still less, contemptuous. In so far as he had the roots of these vices in him—as who has not ?—he deliberately fought them and ended by conquering all that was deliberate without wantonly destroying the natural outcome of his extraordinary temperament and talents. After all, one must either exclude a genius, who is on the whole bound to be a nuisance sometimes, or put up with his performances.

If I were to be asked what really were his dangerous faults during this time, I should not say conceit, and certainly not uncharitableness, but a tendency to a somewhat soft sentimentality, which had nothing to do with what he called his “gush” or effusiveness ; and a real inclination to judge work by its bulk, to be in consequence “swallowed up” in his activities, and to delude himself about his interior life. I am astonished to see how vague and made up of sweeping generalities his spiritual notes now are ; they are, moreover, kept far less regularly than the diary itself, and very much worse written. Again and again he resolves to write them down, after reflection, each day, but he leaves out months at a

time, and flings them down, when he does write, more as a sop, you feel, to his self-respect, than with care or conviction. Yet none, as I said, could be more elusive than he, had you only his notes to go by; you would conclude much that both for good and for evil would be exaggerated, and you might be wrong were you to think that just because he says nothing, nothing was happening in his soul.

It is true, I think, that the greatest things of all happened during the next four years, spent at St. Beuno's, unless indeed the divine dictum does not force us to think that one who has been unfaithful in the small things has necessarily been so in the great things too. In fact, I dare say that great things were at any rate happening to Charles Plater all this time, and that the defects, which people saw, were indeed unsubstantial and of no real account.

Meanwhile, I must not leave readers under the impression that these years were full only of scrappy and unproductive work. *Our Social Forces* was a coherent series of articles on existing Catholic institutions with a social bearing, and appeared in the *Universe*. The series called at first *The Outlook*, and then *A Survey of Catholic Social Work*, started on July 8, 1904, in the *Catholic Weekly*, and dealt with Belgium till September. It was almost wholly based on Vermeersch's *Manuel Social*. On September 23, 1904, he went on with France, using far richer sources, and continued this series till September 1905. The literature of the Action Populaire, especially its *Guide Social*, was his main inspiration, and to quote one name, the works of "Yves le Querdec" (M. Fonsegrive). It was now that the idea of a "Catholic Platform" suggested itself;

a basis from which Catholics could unitedly start to offer their special contribution to the world's notice. After a considerable break, he went on to deal with Germany and to explain the working of the Volksverein. Meanwhile another more general series called a "Casual Causerie" was appearing.

What this "press-work" came to imply may be gathered from a letter I received—of course, much later—which explains itself. It alludes to other work too, but it was through this "Press campaign" that he got his hearing.

"To see Father Plater's articles in the press, was the same to the Catholic working-man as water is to the fish. In no other part of the country will he be greater esteemed and remembered than he was, in the North, by the working class. The Retreat House for working-men established here, we are told, was due to Father Plater's efforts for same. To the Catholic working-man layman these retreats are like a few days of heaven upon earth, from my own personal experience. I firmly believe that the Catholic working-man has not lost Father Plater's friendship, but that it has only been transferred from earth to heaven. May he rest in peace and remember us all."

His correspondence began to grow; his articles provoked all sorts of suggestions, and were even creative. A gentleman who went yearly from Woolwich to Mount Melleray in Ireland, to make a retreat which he found to be the "best of summer vacations," wrote to support the erection of a retreat house nearer home; a boys' league was formed by business-men; a little Labour Bureau for Catholics was set going at Walworth. Franciscan Tertiaries perceived that special possibilities and even duties lay before them. I have not attempted

to find out how many of these tender germs survived, developed, and bore fruit. Anyhow, when in the September of 1907 Charles Plater had to leave Stonyhurst and go for four years to study theology at St. Beuno's in North Wales, he forgivably felt that a frost had nipped his fields.

Chapter VI

ORDINATION

September 1907—September 1911

*" I lift this Bread,
And lift therewith the world, myself, and Thee.
Hast Thou not said :
' I, lifted up, will draw the universe to Me ' ?*

*" O heavenward Cup !
The drops that redden in thy tiny bowl
Could swallow up
The oceans undulant from pole to utmost pole.*

*" O no demur,
Weak fingers, to exalt the enormous load.
Thou Christopher !
Thy God sustains thee who sustainest God."*

J. HARVEY.

ST. BEUNO'S College, the Jesuit house of theology, where Charles Plater was to pass the next four years, is built half-way up the mountain known as Benarth on the north-east side of the Vale of Clwyd in Flintshire. The scenery is of great beauty. Rhyl and the sea are away to the right ; Denbigh, to the left, looms on its crag ; the heavy tower of St. Asaph's Cathedral lifts itself from among trees some four miles distant ; and beyond the hills on the far side of the immense valley, yet other hills float upwards till behind them all you see the crest of Snowdon.

The college itself is of grey stone, in the style known as Gothic. Taken as a whole, it has no little dignity. But behind it, a terraced garden climbs upward, in summer, all bright flowers and dark pillar-like cypress-trees and hedges ; at the top is a long walk whence the enormous view can be seen almost

in its entirety. Many, when contemplating those wide pastures and roads and farms and villages, and the old town and the spires, must have found no better "composition of place" for St. Ignatius's meditation on the Kingdom of Christ, when he bids you visualize Our Lord going forth through the synagogues, towns, and homesteads to convert the land. I have liked to stand there with Charles Plater, and that thought was not far from his mind, and inspired him with noble dreams.

Yet it will be guessed without difficulty that there might be some wistfulness in the gaze that followed the trains that crawled through the distant valley. For any active man, accustomed for long past to very energetic, outward work, the prospect of four years' incarceration, over books, might seem unalluring. He might not be tired enough to need a real rest; and anyhow, to go to school again at 30 is none too restful. And you might think you had done with examinations, save perhaps as examiner. To Charles Plater, as I suggested, the prospect seemed definitely grim. Not only had he been exceedingly active, but he was just finding his feet and learning *how* to be active. Further, he left an immense amount of work unfinished, which only he could do: would he ever be able to re-knit the snapped threads? Yet not only was he to find study, dutifully undertaken, grow enthralling, but he was not to have to see his work frustrated. And as for friends, I doubt if any house anywhere has a more friendly atmosphere than St. Beuno's: there is a warmth of geniality there that makes all the undercurrents of life grow happy; and over it broods the thought, emphasized year by year, of the approaching Ordination.

He arrived, then, at St. Beuno's, September 12, 1907, "just in time to be late for dinner." He got a meal, however, in a refectory coloured, he dolefully notes, "a bilious yellow." He felt "very strange and sore, and homesick for the Seminary." However, the yearly retreat began at once, and he found it "excellent."

"Thank God," he writes, "for bringing me here. I am convinced He is drawing me aside and asking me for real generosity. A new kind of life is needed.

"Certain points strike me.

"1. **KEEP CHEERFUL.** This is very important. Don't go about with a long face—don't repine—regret Sem., etc. Don't take yourself too seriously (in wrong sense). Don't talk of self and doings, especially writings, etc. . . .

"2. How about dropping all social study during my stay here? or at least write nothing?"

This sacrifice was not asked of him. He would have made it, but not, I think, to his advantage, nor to anyone else's. But he was loyal to the spirit of the Society which he had joined, in that he did nothing without obtaining, first, the approval of his superiors.

The rest of the notes of this retreat are spiritual and private; but I may own that he still found it hard to rise promptly, and to forbid himself to carp at his professors.

On emerging from retreat he felt happier; found a pile of letters, and many friends to talk to; and accepted the second great impression provided by St. Beuno's, the Ordinations, which moved him much and gave the requisite new momentum.

However, without a day's pause, he embarked upon a new piece of work.

"Sept. 23. Started Kannengieser's *Ketteler*—as good

as a novel. I should like to do a life of him later on, perhaps begin with a sketch for the *Dublin*, and expand into a volume."

He synthesizes the book at the rate of fifty pages a day; discovers another life of the great bishop, in three volumes, by Father Pfülf, and is fortunate in having at St. Beuno's more than one German confrère, who not only helps him with the language but actually knows the author and can give valuable information on Catholic social work in Germany.

The introduction to *Ketteler* grew so long that he cut it off and made it into the article that appeared in the *Month* for February 1908 as "A Plea for Catholic Social Action." The article itself he sent to Father Pfülf for comment. "Not only have I been satisfied," he replied, "but I am highly delighted. It is well done, perfectly well." After this the article could safely appear in the *Dublin*, which it afterwards did.

I find that besides this he had written, before Christmas, an article on "Retreats" for the *Nineteenth Century*—before sending it, he took it to the chapel and asked that it might be accepted "if, and only if, it will do good. If it is taken, I will say the Little Office of the Immaculate Conception 150 times"—had drawn up a scheme for the Scottish C.T.S. concerning pamphlets on Education; had prepared much material for further articles on Germany, and had composed an "absurd rigmarole" headed "Apollo Watereth" on enthusiasm and discouragement, which appeared in the *Tablet*. He keeps count, too, of an immense amount of letters written.

I should insist that neither at St. Beuno's did

this sort of work interfere with his "proper occupations." His Provincial was aware of the writing he did ; and when he asked his Rector if he might send an article to the *Month*, he got the answer : " Send a dozen."

The amount of theological work he did may be gauged by the following list of what he read during this first term :

Much Coleridge¹ ; Pesch on the *History of Theology* ; Eusebius's *Church History* ; P. Allard's *Martyrs* ; Allies's *Church and State* (this he synopsized) ; Sanday's *Outlines of the Life of Christ* ; Miss Baker's *Modern Pilgrim's Progress* ; Dom J. Chapman on Gore (he notes after this, November 24, " I have read about 3,000 pages in the last six weeks, of course not counting textbooks and such things ") ; a " lot " of Franzelin on the Church ; some of Lightfoot's *Essays* ; Stanton's *Gospels as Historical Documents* ; and a quantity of the New Testament in German. All this, it is clear, fitted in with the treatise on Apologetics that he was following that year. Nor did he scorn " official " reading. He had a system, carefully adhered to, of repeating the week's work with his friends ; and his notebooks are perfect. They are complete, and anyone can understand them—a rare quality in notes. I may say once for all that he kept up this average of work and digested it sufficiently. Of course, he took his share in the " disputations " which form part of the regular theological training.

Yet his life was more than reading and writing ! The glorious surroundings of St. Beuno's are full of material for expeditions—ancient buildings of various

¹ Doubtless Father Coleridge's volumes on the Life of our Lord in the Quarterly Series.

authenticity, but always worth exploring, or just the mountains from which the view is lovely even in the winter. Besides, there were tumuli not far off where he and others got leave to dig, and found ashes, and chips of pottery, and bits of human bones.

The discoveries, if not sensational, were genuine. Mr. Myres came down and took a personal interest in the work; it looked as if the Anthropological Bureau had a future after all. Meanwhile muscles, digestion, and sleep profited.

In the house Charles spoke weekly at a small sermon club, and with real vivacity in the fortnightly debates; and wrote sheaves of personal and scurrilous, but always quite venomless verses, which he sang at concerts, chaffing even the most important persons, to their surprise, and after the first gasp, delight.

Above all, the Provincial had told him, in September, that the retreat scheme was, perhaps, nearer realization than he thought; practical persons wrote asking for copies of his pamphlet: "Hooray! I smell a rat!" And meanwhile he is keeping his hopes high by infecting others, from Rector downwards, with his own enthusiasm.

At this high pressure—I may say, at this strain—the first term was lived. I am bound to add, however, that he deliriously welcomed a legitimate break—an oasis, he called it—in this first strenuous term.

From October 23 to 26 he went to Oxford to take his M.A. degree. The diary, in which you could watch him, so far, setting his teeth, as it were, in the endeavour to create an interest in his new life, now grew exhilarated. He travelled from St. Beuno's with a companion with whom he visited

Chester, and discussed the New Testament or Cæsar-worship, in train and street.

“Then, when we were both tired of talking, he read the Assumption of Moses, and I read the *Republic*, book vi, which I have never enjoyed so much in my life. It was just the time and place for that wonderful book—steaming into Oxford and all its pleasant memories. There were no exams to distract one, and the prospect of seeing the dear men there was delightful beyond words. So Plato was never more congenial. His music was delicious, and his glorification of Philosophy made me want to shout. But one thought too of the waste of material that goes on in our own day as in Plato’s—the degeneration of generous youth under the steady pressure of worldliness—how many grand enthusiasms get put out . . . how many men grow dull, mechanical, and hard. πανσμικρόν τι—a tiny remnant survives—but Oxford should increase the number of the elect. I craned my neck too for a first glimpse of the spires. Hurrah! . . . Crowded platform. A. and G. spot us: Father Rickaby. Splendid! That trio is better for the eyes than all the Welsh scenery.”

Excitement swamps him; he feels faint at dinner; recovers, spends the evening in talk, and the next day, after taking his degree, pays whirlwind visits—Mr. H. F. Fox, Dr. Warde Fowler (with whom he used to go on ornithological jaunts), Mr. Urquhart, Mr. J. A. Smith; and on Friday borrows a bicycle and lunches at Dorchester with his old friend Dr. Barry, and at 7.30 “trots round” to dine with Mr. Garrod at Merton and discusses Pragmatism and Free Will. . . . On Saturday—

“I pack my modest effects and say good-bye to the men at the Hall—a very difficult thing to do. But the oasis has been delightful indeed. Was there ever such a houseful of charming fellows? The visit will be something to browse

over for a long time to come. I cannot remember two happier days in my life, except my First Communion and my Vows, and one or two home events.

"Now for the C major of this life, without which such oases were impossible. I don't think my delight at the visit is wrong: because after all such delight is the *οἰκεια ἡδονή*, the essentially appropriate pleasure. Societas Jesu, Societas Amoris. To feel that as keenly as I do is surely a grace."

In 1908 the retreat movement rapidly acquired momentum. Father Buckland, S.J., wrote that the scheme in general was approved, and again that he had leave to settle on a house and to receive subscriptions. "Hurray! *Deo Gratias!*" cries Charles Plater in a breath. He sends four articles on Retreats to the *Catholic Times*, and at once a new category of correspondence begins. Working-men; Socialist councillors from a great city; news that the Accrington sodalists are all to go for a retreat, if not yet to a proper house, at least to Stonyhurst, in the summer. The name Compstall Hall is mentioned; authorities approve; Charles bombards his friends for prayers, and writes more articles.

In February another oasis, this time definitely connected with the retreat work, and he begins his public apostolate on its behalf. He went on the 29th to St. Mary's Hall during the Shrovetide holiday. He worked steadily there at retreat affairs—he found a novena going on there for the success of the new house at Marple—and on Wednesday, March 4, he lectured to the Preston and County Club to some forty members, all of whom seemed keen on the idea of workers' retreats; many of them were themselves employers of labour—"just the right sort of people"—with a keen sense of

their responsibility. "I believe that this work," said one of them, an alderman, "is going to be the beginning of the conversion of England; and for some time afterwards Plater used these words as a text. It was now, too, that he wrote to his cousin that the retreat movement was his life's work.

He returned next day to St. Beuno's fortified with the promise of the employer of some forty Catholic working-men that he would arrange for all of them to come to retreat.

"So ends," he writes, "the Second Oasis, a delightful break. I know of no pleasure like that of seeing old friends again."

During this term, however, he had been much pre-occupied with the need of using, and indeed of popularizing, the apologetic work that he was being taught. He thought of a column in the *Catholic Times* to be called "The Arsenal," dealing with the sort of matter used by Mr. Blatchford and accessible in the *Clarion*. He meditated a controversial handbook, and a plan for indexing the *Month*, and an elaborate scheme for widening the scope and improving the level of that magazine, and I believe that some of his suggestions have been used by the present editor. But he was even more concerned by the neglect of the Catholic Press in general, especially that suited to the ordinary reader, and he writes a paper on the subject, in two parts, to the Essay Society, where he has "the best attendance of the year"; he finally sends an article on the subject to the *Month*.

Meanwhile he neglects no ordinary work and refuses no requests for assistance, and reads through all the proofs of a technical book by Father T. Slater,

his Professor of Moral, a task he in fact welcomed because of the precision and lucidity of that writer's doctrine.

In mid-March the news came that Compstall Hall was to be bought, and a new mass of correspondence, begging letters this time, began. Rome wrote its approbation, and after a while the Pope's blessing reached Compstall, and was followed, some time later, by the gift of a chalice.

This is not the place to write the history of the various retreat houses which began, from now on, to spring up : here I wish to speak of the subject only in so far as it affected its inspirer. The most important point is, that he now began to get into touch with laymen who could understand and help him. Such was Mr. P. Lacy, chairman of the Birmingham Stock Exchange and the secretary of the central council of the C.Y.M.S., who sends him a "pile of documents." No wonder that he begins to feel Hebrew "overwhelming." But he stays faithful to his "proper work," digs at tumuli, and passes a recollected Passiontide, watching three hours before the Sepulchre.

In May he paid his first visit to Compstall, and took photographs of that stolid mansion which were to be made up into postcards and lantern slides. He wrote an article for the *Hibbert Journal* on Retreats—it was destined to have sensational results—and another for the *Spectator*. Both were accepted. The Director of the *Volksverein* asks of him a section on English Catholic Congresses for an article to appear in the *Catholic Encyclopedia*, but on the whole he is repeating "furiously" in view of the First Year theology examination, which he underwent satisfactorily on July 24.

After one more article in the *Month* on "Catholic Social Work in Schools," he went with the rest to Barmouth for his fortnight's vacation.

He enjoyed it to the full, rowed, listened to music, read novels, and returned to write articles both for the French *Guide Social*, and for the *Month* on "Social Progress in 1908," and to do a good deal of reading on directly social topics which he refused to himself in term.

On August 27 he went to London and put in much time at the British Institute of Social Service, on his review of the year's work for the *Guide Social*, and strengthened many friendships, as with Mr. Leslie Toke, one of his most sympathetic collaborators later on, and with Mr. B. Devas, then sub-editor of the *Dublin Review*. Mr. Devas fell in France in November 1916. He made, too, the acquaintance of the editor of *Progress*, and it was now that I renewed my own association with him, which had had to survive, except for brief intervals, on such letters as each of us had time to write.

He returned on September 10 to St. Beuno's, whither I followed him after a few days. He was profoundly affected by the ordination of so many old friends, and quite broke down when receiving their first priestly blessing.

I shall not enter into such full details about the rest of his years at St. Beuno's, because what I have said is characteristic. That amount and that intensity of work must be assumed as the background of whatever else I say.

The new year brought, however, its changes. He welcomed, it is true, an old friend from Canterbury, Père Albert Valensin, who guided him with such skill and charm through the difficult treatise on

Grace that, as we often said later on, we had been enabled to read the New Testament with enlightened eyes. St. Paul and St. John "came alive." But the departure of the Rector was a severe blow. Plater had got to love very sincerely Father John Clayton, who was yielding his post to a very brilliant scholar, Father C. Townsend. Father Clayton was not a scholar, but the most loyal-hearted of friends, and absolutely without affectations. He often sang at concerts, and now performed, as a good-bye, two songs. He always sang them unaccompanied, and with the aid of a large magnifying-glass; he chose old English songs, and chanted them with great conviction, and was always cheered to the echo. I do not think that anything this honest and honourable man might do could ever have been thought undignified. He died in 1915.

This term Charles Plater was definitely unwell; his vacation had been no vacation—it never was—and he had to give up much that he wanted to do. Yet he kept his courage and his sense of humour, as when, having to take part in a discussion on the duties of judges and witnesses, he took all his examples from the trial episode in *Pickwick*. Besides, he was encouraged by his *Hibbert* article bearing fruit. The secretary of the Edinburgh Free Church Theological College had read it, and wrote to ask about retreats.

He spent the Christmas vacation at St. Mary's Hall, but felt too ill, as I well remember, to take much part in the festivities, and accomplished the return journey only with difficulty.

Skating; and helping his very old friend, the late Father Kenelm Digby Beste, to convert a grim courtyard into a flower-garden, gave him the

needed exercise and distraction. Besides, two further pieces of news came to brighten the whole world for him. A committee of wealthy New York laymen had been formed to start a retreat house in that city. And the *Hibbert* article continued to bear its miraculous fruit. The warden of Liddon House asked leave to reprint it for private circulation, and an Australian correspondent wrote to say that he would reprint 1,000 copies of it and distribute them to the clergy of all denominations in Australia.

He was asked, too, to "devil" for a well-known writer, who proposed to bring out a book on Socialism, and he spent hours over this work, which, like very much that he did during his life, was to bring him no personal glory. You may say that this unknown, toilsome sort of work bulked much larger in his sum-total than most people ever dreamed of.

But Friday, April 2, is a day to remember.

I like to recall that he and I started it by "defending" the term's theses at a *Menstruum*, or public discussion; he, the doctrine of Creation. He then went out to work in the garden, and in the evening the Creator walked in it, for it was then and there that he

"got the idea of starting a Catholic Sociological Society."

On Easter Sunday I was visited by two friends, one of them Mr. F. R. Muir, destined to be the treasurer of the Catholic Social Guild. Plater imparted to these and to one or two others his ideal—for example, Mr. J. Britten and Mr. Leslie Toke. Needless to say, he met with their keen sympathy.

An added piece of work was the revision of the translation of the Constitutions of the Congregation

of the Faithful Virgin, and the completion of the revision of his four *Dublin* articles, for which a place was at first foreseen in the Westminster Series. He did not care for this idea, but notes :

“ I will try to write a book next year for that series on Catholic Social Theory and Practice. Eh, what ? ”

On July 2 and 10 respectively he passed his Moral examination and that in the second year's work in Dogma. So this term ended.

The vacation was chiefly filled in preparing for the Catholic Truth Society's Silver Jubilee Conference, to be held in Manchester in September. The Conference was to be a notable event in more ways than one. Not only were Charles Plater and his friends to launch during it the whole scheme of the Catholic Social Guild, but that Guild was actually to be created, in the charmingly informal and half haphazard way I shall describe. Meanwhile a statement for distribution had been prepared and all sorts of people memorialized.

Besides this, Plater, with many others, had for some time been convinced that National Catholic Congresses ought to exist in England. The Continent, it was felt, left no doubt as to the desirability of this. Plater had collected much information about such Congresses, had forwarded it to distinguished personages, and had been asked to collect yet more. All sorts of complications were at once foreseen. What effect would the creation of such Congresses have upon the C.T.S. Conferences, which had so amply proved their worth ? Charles Plater, whose acquaintanceship with Mr. Britten, the creator of the C.T.S. and of its Conferences, had been long and intimate, could not, of course,

tolerate the idea that it, or they, should in any way be injured. But his outlook was more and more inclusive, and never less than national. He foresaw the time when all the Catholic forces of the nation should be mobilized, the C.T.S. holding its unique place among them, and when all these elements—too often scattered and ineffective in their isolation—should be grouped, co-ordinated, and caused to converge into one great yet manifold Catholic instrument.

With these two ideas to guide him, he left for Manchester, and arrived there on September 20, picked up various friends, and got the preliminary tasks over so as to be able to start business at once next day.

He now met some who, like Mrs. V. M. Crawford, were to be among his most devoted collaborators, but who, so invisible had he hitherto remained, had by now decided that he was a sort of Jesuit Mrs. Harris and probably a committee. Mrs. (now Lady) Gibbs was, too, a new acquaintance despite long correspondence, and also Mr. Belloc. It was Plater's fate, during those days, to pay the penalty of an active imagination, and to find that all these people were quite different from anything that he had pictured.

For him the first great moment came on the 21st, at lunch, which he had at Ingham's Hotel in Portland Street. Into this vague meal were swept Mgr. Parkinson, Miss Margaret Fletcher (whom Charles persisted in wishing to see made a bishop), Mrs. Crawford, Mrs. Gibbs, Miss A. Streeter, Father J. Lomax (secretary of the Catholic School of Social Science, Salford), Dom Lambert Nolle, O.S.B., Mr. Byrne (president of the C.Y.M.S.),

Mr. H. Hull, Mr. B. Devas, Mr. Leslie Toke, Mr. G. Elliot Anstruther, and his old friend Dr. A. Mooney, of Preston.

“Mgr. Parkinson kept us in order, though there was a tendency for all to speak at once. Business began as soon as we had finished our soup.”

Mr. Toke outlined the idea of the new society ; a Northern and a Southern Committee were arranged (neither of them included Plater : he was not yet free for active work) ; and a Central Committee, consisting of Mgr. Parkinson, Dom Lambert Nolle, and Mr. Toke, was formed. The C.W.L. authorized the new Guild to use its London offices as its Southern bureau. All sorts of ideas were aired, and then everyone adjourned to the Hall, where Plater was to read his paper on the “Social Outlook and Duties of Catholics.” The Bishop of Salford was in the chair, and eight other bishops were present. Unanimous approval met the suggestions made by the speakers, and an immense amount of circulars were distributed at the doors. At the Bishops’ Reception that night in the large Free Trade Hall, Charles Plater had, I find him ruefully noting, to be scolded for not having eaten any lunch, and in general for behaving “like an excited child.” I will not deny that he was, if not a trifle hysterical, at least decidedly strung up. On the evenings of those conference days I used to take him to some small cocoa shop, to let him work off his nerves ; and that night, I remember, Mr. Toke, Mr. Devas, and I were with him, and when, by the most improbable of surmises, the young lady to whom we paid our bills did rapturous homage to him under the impression that he was a Methodist

minister in Manchester for I know not what Wesleyan assembly, he collapsed into such helpless laughter in the shop and outside that we had much ado to prevent a crowd. But those little good-night meals were always among the most pleasant incidents of a tiring spell.

The next morning was devoted to discussions on apologetics, and in particular of a series of papers on the history of religions which was ultimately brought out by the C.T.S., and which Plater always vigorously encouraged. Even now he half foresaw that his Guild would need an apologetic as well as a directly sociological literature. In the afternoon we went to Marple and saw Compstall Hall, and in it I seemed to perceive, under his inspiration, the necessary complement alike to the social and the intellectual apostolates that he was meditating.

The next day he took a large party to Stonyhurst, and on Friday evening returned to St. Beuno's by way of Manchester, where he enlisted the valuable sympathy of Dr. Pooch and of St. Bede's College staff. On the way an incident occurred too characteristic to be omitted :

"Tram to Cenacle. Tram conductor caught my attention, a boy of 18 or so, of extraordinary vivacity and refined geniality of manner. I talked to him about wages, work, life. He amazed me by telling me he was a Manchester man ; the best American type seemed to me more near the mark. When I left the tram, he ran after me and asked eagerly ; " You know what I am, Father ? You know what I am ? " " A Catholic," I said. *Then* he talked ! He had been to *Gerontius* the night before and told me that it made him feel as one does a ter Confession. [Much later the same day] walked to tram, and met my idealistic tram conductor once more, by a curious chance or

Providence. I asked him to write to me, which he gladly promised to do. I must get him to Compstall. [In the margin is a note: "T. C. called on me at Oakwood, June 1913."]

"Drove to college. Glad to get back to this dear old house. Must try with God's grace to spend a profitable year, and let the Holy Ghost make me good. Otherwise I shall do nothing."

I may add at once that yet another oasis occurred from October 30 to November 2, when he went to Oscott for the first time on C.S.G. business. Mgr. Parkinson provided a welcome which, from now on, was to be many times renewed. Mrs. Crawford, Mr. Britten, Mr. Toke, and Mr. Devas were present, and Mr. C. J. King became the new secretary of the Guild. On this Sunday, committee meetings lasted from 10 to 8, from 3 to 5, from 5.30 to 7; and next day from 10.30 to 1, and from 2.30 to 4. Besides this there was, of course, an infinity of informal talks. However, there were, too, diversions, and soon, excursions, for Dom L. Nolle showed Plater over Erdington and introduced him to its then Prior, Dom John Chapman; and at Oscott itself he was specially invited to the students' Sunday sing-song, a function from which professors were rigorously excluded; he recited some of Mrs. Turner's *Cautionary Tales*,¹ adding his own emendations, and on the Monday played the 'cello in some Haydn quartettes and Grieg trios, arriving back at St. Beuno's next day at 5 and attending the due lecture at 5.30.

"So ended a glorious interlude. Everyone at Oscott most kind."

¹ See Appendix, p. 382.

Matters progressed quietly, but with much cause for encouragement, especially at Preston under the energetic inspiration of Canon Cosgrave and Dr. Mooney; other associations began to desire affiliation, and the valued co-operation of Father R. Middleton, S.J., who was lecturing to a new Catholic Social Reform Association in Glasgow, was assured.

But the next C.S.G. landmark was to be the first National Congress at Leeds, of which I speak below.

Meanwhile his level of effort may be gauged by an entry which I quote, dated August 29, 1909 :

“ Typed and sent off index of books on German social work.

Finished and revised contributions for Guide Social (55 type-written pages, about 10,000 words).

Read and synopsised 20 pages of Tanqueray on development of doctrine, etc.

Walked to St. Asaph with N.

Typed articles for *Catholic Times*.

A good Sunday's work, eh ? ”

Further encouragement came in the shape of the purchase of 300 copies of the book on German social work, to be distributed among the Executive Committee of the Westminster Federation, and the suggestion of similar volumes to follow it and make a series. Mrs. Crawford did, indeed, do one on Swiss social work ; Father Garrold was to do one on Belgium ; he foresaw one on Holland, and resolved to do France himself.

On November 11 he “ compiled and wrote nearly the whole of a book : *Catholic Social Year-book* for 1910,” using four *Month* articles and other published material of his own for that purpose. “ At it all day, except from 11 to 12.30, when I played tennis.”

He continued to compile C.S.G. bibliographies ; drew up a scheme of penny pamphlets that the Guild might publish, wrote the Catholic Social Catechism, and innumerable articles which, henceforward, I give up any attempt to catalogue. They were, in a sense, ephemeral, and yet, bearing directly on the subject of social study, or else of retreats, caused a real pressure on Catholic public opinion, and made him and his ideals better known.

He finished also *The Apostolate of the Press*, which was published in 1909.

One new focus of work presented itself. In May he began to correspond with Surgeon-General Maunsell about the creation of a Catholic Doctors' Guild. He made many suggestions, drew up lists of doctors, drafted statutes, and remained always a devoted friend of the Guild when it actually came into being.

Finally I may mention that he drew up a scheme for a series of C.T.S. pamphlets on the Church in Wales, which, in view of much revival of interest in Catholicism in that principality since Father Plater's time, may yet prove useful.

Among some visits, as to Preston, St. Bede's, Manchester, and Stonyhurst, one must be mentioned paid on December 27 to the new retreat house at Romiley, to which a move had been made from Marple that very day.

"Much impressed by the house. A great joy to find myself in it, and to think of all the good it may do."

He spent his time fixing up furniture, building himself a bed, and talking with the Superior, Father Buckland.

He passed his examination in Moral Theology, in view of hearing confessions, on January 23, and that in his third year's theological work on July 3. "Passed—*Deo Gratias*."

The First National Catholic Congress began at Leeds on July 28, 1909. Charles Plater arrived the day before, entered a tram under the impression that it would take him to the Jesuit College, and was deposited by his or its guardian angel at the University, where the meetings were to be held. Here he met a number of friends, and helped to arrange a stall for the sale of the literature of the *Action Populaire*, which thus got its first concrete introduction to an English public.

The Congress was of course epoch-making as the first of its kind; also, the Lord Mayor of London, Sir John Knill, a Catholic, arrived with the Archbishop of Westminster and the bishops, and after the civic reception by the Lord Mayor of Leeds at the Town Hall, went in solemn procession to the Cathedral, where Benediction was given. At the mass meeting that night the Archbishop went out of his way to commend the Guild, and next day, after the meeting of the Medical Guild, at which Plater, of course, was present, the C.S.G. made its first official appearance at an afternoon combined meeting of the C.T.S., the C.W.L., and the C.S.G., under the presidency of the Bishop of Northampton, now Archbishop of Liverpool, one of the earliest and firmest friends the Guild has ever had.

"Mrs. Gibbs read her paper admirably and it made a great impression." Other papers, by Miss E. Fortey, Dr. Mooney, and Mgr. Parkinson, followed. Plater meanwhile was sitting at the back

of the hall, invisible. Suddenly the President announced that there would be no discussion, but that Mr. Plater would address the meeting.

“ I walked on to the platform without the least idea of what I was going to say. What I did say I don’t know. . . . Then the Archbishop rose and made an excellent speech in praise of the Guild—very strong and democratic and most cordial. He talked to me afterwards and was most encouraging.”

After tea there was a committee meeting of the C.S.G., and innumerable conversations till very late.

“ So ended,” he not unreasonably notes, “ a long and tiring day.”

He had, in fact, risen at 4.40 to serve Father Gerard’s Mass, which had to be said at 5.15, and C.S.G. business had begun at 9.

On Sunday he visited the Hunslet workhouse, and went to the mass meeting at the Town Hall, which was so packed that an overflow meeting of 1,000 had to be arranged at a moment’s notice; and on Monday the first C.S.G. separate meeting was held, lasting from 10.30 to 12.30, in the science theatre, decorated by the C.W.L. Several working-men were present.

“ General meeting at 2.30. At the last moment it was discovered that the temperance meeting headed by the Archbishop of Westminster and the Bishop of Southwark had arranged to meet in the same room at the same time. After an awkward pause, in which the Archbishop showed all his usual tact, the temperance people withdrew to another room and our hall gradually filled up. Between 250 and 300 were present—and such an excellent audience . . . I felt at home with them. . . . We went on till

about 5. . . . Altogether a very successful meeting: I have seldom seen one so keen."

On Tuesday he adds:

"The Social Guild has left its mark on the congress. Besides having its own three meetings, it was pointedly commended in two different speeches by the Archbishop, and in other sectional meetings by Dr. Mooney (Trade Unionists), Fr. Wright (Federationists), etc."

Almost immediately after Leeds, Charles Plater went for his fortnight's holiday to Barmouth, but even there had interviews with Mr. and Mrs. Sidney Webb, with the superintendent of the Liverpool Labour Exchange, and with Mr. Tawney, to whom he was destined to be chairman, long afterwards, on an Oxford platform.

Abruptly, the diary now announces: "Visit to Belgium." And he, in fact, crossed to Ostend on Sunday, August 21. Need I say, he had made friends with a travelling companion, an Oxford man, and had stayed with him at Ostend? And when, next day, he left Bruges for Enghien, he

"travelled with some Belgian workmen. I gave them cigars and drew them out. An hour and a half wait at Ghent. More workmen and more cigars and more drawing out. The men got out after three stations—was it the cigars? Their place was taken by a charming young soldier of the 3rd Regiment of the Line—C. D., an old boy of ours at Charleroi. . . . He was extremely bright and charming and I gave him all the remainder of my cigars. . . ."

At Enghien he went straight to the Jesuit college, and it at once becomes evident that he had arrived for retreat work, since he at once met Père Watrigant, S.J., whose delightful personality, as well as

his amazing library of *The Exercises*, is described by Father Plater in his *Retreats for the People*, especially pp. 52, 53, 260, and following. He spent all day working in the library under his supervision, and ends characteristically :

“Made the acquaintance of a young and charming Father remarkably like D. He can’t be a professor. Who and what is he? Anyhow he enjoyed a cigarette and said all the right things.”

Next day he rose at 3.30, received Holy Communion at 4.15, “gulped down” some coffee, and was at Louvain before 8.

“Ordination in full swing. It had begun at 7. . . . I was soon under the spell. . . . Willaert the only one I knew.”

He received Holy Communion at this old friend’s first Mass next day, and after much talk with the sociologist Père Vermeersch and others, and an “enormous dinner” with “culinary fireworks,” he returned to Enghien, and on the 26th worked in the library from 7.30 to 11.45 and from 2 to 7, and renewed acquaintance with some exiled French Jesuits and in particular, next day at Brussels, with Père Pupey-Girard. With him he went to the first *Conseil International des Ligues Catholiques Féminines*, where he found Miss Fletcher and Mrs. Crawford and many persons of European note, including M. Georges Goyau and his wife and his old friend Père Penfentenyo. After lunch he visited the Cenacle convent, to learn how Belgium managed its women’s retreats, and spent the next four days in the Enghien Library.

On September 1 he visited the retreat house at

Fayt, in Hainault, of which an account appears in *Retreats for the People*, pp. 71 to 75. It also figures in M. René Bazin's famous novel *Le Blé qui Lève*, translated into English as *The Rising Corn*. There he met Père Lechien, who gave him an interview of about three hours and loaded him with documents; on the 3rd he visited the Mouvaux and Ghent retreat houses,¹ and also Tronchiennes.² That night he crossed to England, and arrived at St. Beuno's late on the 3rd.

Sunday 4th to Thursday 8th were occupied, he notes, as follows :

“ Much correspondence to work off—accumulated during my absence.

Daily practice of Mass and Office.

Article for *Catholic World* on Leeds Congress.

Article for *Month* on Social Study in Seminaries.

Two articles for *Catholic Times* on Retreats.

Sermon on St. Francis to be preached at Pantasaph on October 4.

Altogether a pretty crowded three days, eh what ? ”

He then entered the retreat which was to end with his ordination, and was in fact ordained sub-deacon on the 22nd and deacon on the 24th. Immediately after this ceremony he went to London and thence to Manresa House, where he had obtained leave to be ordained, for the sake of his mother and other relatives and friends who might have found St. Beuno's too crowded or too distant for them.

I went down from London with Mr. Urquhart to assist at his ordination, and remembering his unwonted calm during the conferring of the Sacrament

¹ Cf. *Retreats*, pp. 55-60, 75-6.

² Ibid., p. 82.

I do not wonder that the only comment on the event is :

“*Deo Gratias.* A wonderful day, full of peace and confidence.”

He said his first Mass in St. Joseph's parish church next day, and on the 28th offered the Holy Sacrifice at Mortlake for the repose of his father's soul, his two brothers serving him. He made a few more visits and returned to St. Beuno's on the 30th.

There was nothing of importance to note during the rest of this year. He allowed himself an inter-space—the daily Mass “filling the day with its light and warmth.” He refused all Christmas invitations, and finished the proofs of the forthcoming *Year-book*.

It might reasonably be expected that I should pause here to review the life of him whom we can at last call Father Plater, the name by which he will always be best known. But the Jesuit course of theology does not stop at ordination, but normally continues for another year, and even then is normally followed by the “Tertianship,” or third year of probation; a sort of final noviceship, during which the spirit, exhausted, probably, by so much study and active work in the colleges, is given its final refreshment, and, it may be, test. Only after this are the Last Vows taken, and that is where the real break in life may be said to come. I join, therefore, to what I have said about the last three years of Father Plater's life, the brief account of the next two.

Brief, because he deliberately shifted from himself all he could of distracting occupations. He abstained from the editorship of the *Year-book* and

resigned the secretaryship of the C.S.G. Literary Committee. Even his excursions were few, and confined to the neighbourhood, as to Rhyl and Wrexham, for week-end "supplies." In Holy Week he was at Leamington, glad to assist Dr. Barry, now in charge of St. Peter's Church there, in the offices. By way of Downside, of which the beauty even then overwhelmed him—"it is as good as a retreat"—he went on to Torquay, where his sister was Superioress of St. Vincent's Orphanage, and, after a certain amount of C.S.G. business in London, returned to St. Beuno's. The only considerable break occurs in June, when he went to Oakwood, where most of the leading personages of the Guild were in retreat; this was followed by a *conversazione*, and on the 24th he went to Knutsford and had his first experience of prison work.

On July 7 he reaped the fruit of this long application to the repetition of all his theology, by undergoing successfully his final examination, and on the 8th he notes without comment, "Left St. Beuno's."

I have asked myself what was Charles Plater's real feeling about theology. I hope I have made it clear that he studied it with real energy and interest, and lived in loyal communication with his professors. But this might have been an effect of will; a conviction that this was what Obedience demanded. In part this was doubtless so. He did not expect or wish to be an expert at theology any more than he could have been at classics. But no one that I know of ever accused him of unorthodoxy, and no one ought to accuse him of underrating scholastic theology. It is quite true that he never expected to be able to use large parts of what he

was learning, and it is equally true that he felt friendly towards a thing rather in proportion as he might use it. Much of theology, therefore, he contemplated with no more than a sincere respect as part of a marvellously complete and exact scientific system. But you can admire a system without giving it the active adhesion of all that you have within you. Parts of you may remain untouched. So for chemistry. So for music. I am inclined to think that Charles Plater embarked on his theology with, and preserved during it, a great gift of faith and a no less gift of piety. His temptations, so to call them, would not, then, have borne against the truths of faith in themselves, so much as against the reality or worth of his own faith; for, he would think, the truths that he saw to be so tremendous (such as his favourite doctrines of the soul's incorporation with Christ by Grace, and of the inhabitation in us of the Holy Ghost) ought to transform a believing soul more rapidly and completely than, he felt, they transformed his own. It had to be put to him that the reason he felt he was not believing was precisely his exceptionally vivid realization of the truth to be believed. You had only to ask him what he would do if the Incarnation and all the dogmas connected with the life of supernatural grace were not true, to find that the whole universe would seem to have become, for him, a mad place, and that life would cease at once to be in any way livable.

What he asked of theology was, I think, that it should enable him to be honest and yet not merely subjective when talking to others. He wanted to feel that he was, when preaching, instructing, or arguing, putting up a genuinely good case. When he

had got that, he was satisfied. His friends remember his trick, after some heated discussion on a point of history or doctrine, of shutting up his books with decision and saying: "*Yes, I think so.*" He meant, not that he felt he had got to the bottom of the matter, but that he had got as far as could be got, or anyhow as far as he could get, or, even more accurately, as far as he need go. This made it look, sometimes, as if his interest in theology were merely utilitarian. It was largely utilitarian, but not merely so. Or, that he was content with "putting up a case." Well, given his faith, which alone mattered for him, he was content with a case for the sake of others. He wanted to be, and was, clear that the arguments put up, say, by Modernists, were not good in themselves; he was personally quite sure that there did not exist such arguments on the heterodox side—this does not mean he was incapable of appreciating the force of an argument opposed to his belief; he appreciated it very well;—but he wanted to be convinced that his own arguments were as good and better. Still, he retained the chilliest of affection for argument, and a very resolute dislike for controversy. This, of course, did not prevent him from developing sudden panics when he saw or heard of the ravages of rationalism. He at once determined that "something must be done," but this issued into nothing so concrete as his social work. It remains that, as Father G. Gallagher writes to me, he worked fearfully hard at his theology, protestingly hard as it were. He knew his work would lie somewhat outside those fields, but therefore he toiled at them as if to show that his *attrait* need not interfere with the work to his hand—must not, in fact, *if it was to be blessed*.

During the rest of July he did parish work at Oxford, completing his book on Retreats by the end of August. During that month the Second National Catholic Congress took place at Newcastle ; oddly, both his notes and my own recollections suggest that he was at this time less directly occupied with C.S.G. work than with anti-rationalist literature. Of course there were executive and business meetings of the C.S.G. and a joint meeting with the C.T.S. and other societies. He read a paper of his own to the Catholic Reading Guild, and I think turned the whole of his audience into the hall where I was reading one on the need of popular Catholic apologetic work. Anyhow the place became full to overflowing, and the paper had to be read again in another hall equally full. He did not, however, gather up those particular threads until we met again, much later, at Oxford, when he once more began to weave them into wide schemes. He returned thither after the Congress until it was time for him to go to Ireland for his Tertianship, which was to begin on September 30.

Chapter VII

THE TERTIANSHIP

September 1911—September 1912

*"What is this life if, full of care,
We have no time to stand and stare :
No time to see, in broad daylight,
Streams full of stars, like skies at night ?
A poor life this if, full of care,
We have no time to stand and stare."*

W. H. DAVIES : *Leisure*.

FATHER PLATER proceeded then, at the appointed time, from England to Dublin, and thence to St. Stanislaus's College, Tullamore, Tullabeg.

"These," he writes at once, "are very happy days. Much peace and quiet and leisurely office and prayer—a calm, orderly day. Very restful and welcome after the rushing about."

This was not just self-encouragement ; he really wanted to draw breath. Even the spell at Oxford had been fussed by minutiae.

"He fitted in," his Tertian-master, Father Ignatius Gartlan, writes to me, "so completely with the system that it is hard to give a record. He was quiet and bright, but steadily got through a great deal of work. In an astonishingly short time, with helpers glad to be commandeered and organized by him, he made a catalogue of the library, which was in confusion. His personality did much to make all united, contented, and happy."

His Long Retreat of a month began in mid-October. He was endlessly grateful for its strengthening peace ; but it throws no new light on his character, which was already formed in all its substantial elements.

On Christmas Day he heard the midnight Mass, said his own three from 5 to 6.30, and heard three more. Then Lent drew near, during which Tertians go out to assist in the special missions or other activities proper to that season.

Father Plater went first to Clongowes College, where he lectured to the boys on "The Call for Catholic Laymen," and thence to Maynooth, where he made friends whom he was to meet again. Thence he went to Miltown Park, the Jesuit house of theology near Dublin, and put in some very busy days there. His cicerone in Dublin was Father W. P. Hackett, well known for his enthusiasm in all social work; he met Mr. Douglas Hyde, "superlatively charming. A real enthusiast. Much light on the Gaelic League"; Mr. George Russell, and many officials of the Irish C.T.S., whom he found anxious about the inroads of socialism and rationalism, and by whom he was closely questioned. Father T. Finlay, whom he had met at Stonyhurst and when he came to speak at the Oxford Union on the proposed Irish University, had more than one very long and intimate conversation with him; and he spent a long time, too, with Dr. Mahaffy, of Trinity, whose talk was most friendly, and is reported in the diary at unusual length, and with Count Plunkett, whom he was to meet in even sadder times at Oxford. Besides personages, he visited the official sights, especially museums, and had many talks with Father H. Brown, then President of the Classical Association, the author of *Homeric Study*, which brought Father Plater back for a while to Mycenæ and to Crete. He inspects a working-boys' club, the Labour Exchange, and tours the slums. He lectures to the Miltown theologians on the

revival of retreats for the people, and again on social study for priests, and finally gives a retreat to twenty-seven men, "mostly or entirely from the Civil Service." He discusses with them the need of forming study-clubs, and his hopes soar high.

But the crown to this short stay was an invitation to lecture at Maynooth. Thither he went, wearing the fatal flat black hat which caused him, in the train, to be mistaken by two Maynooth students, in the same compartment, for a parson. "They were polite, but reserved," and discussed Plato. But the ultimate recognition brought the completest cordiality, and his audience of 400 greeted him with an ovation.

He spoke for an hour and a quarter, and sketched the history of the Church's social influence from the fifth century onwards, ending with a more detailed account of the modern Catholic activities even in the period preceding *Rerum Novarum*, and then in quite recent times. Two more "vigorous ovations" consoled him for his feeling that here and there the lecture had "dragged," and he came away with the most delightful memories of Maynooth.

Next day he crossed to England and went to Torquay, where he gave a retreat to the St. Vincent's boys (St. Philip's House), where his sister was superior. His audience was about 100, and "very attentive; silence perfect"; he gave extra talks to the "working boys."

Thence he went to Devonport and preached his first mission to an audience almost entirely composed of sailors.

At its close, on Palm Sunday, he wrote :

"This evening's service I shall never forget. The church

was full half an hour before evening service began—packed when Compline began. Our Lady's chapel full of blue-jackets, sitting or kneeling on the ground: bluejackets down the aisles, bluejackets in the sanctuary, sitting on the altar steps. How I do love 'em! They were shy at first—like big schoolboys—but after a few meetings in the box and out of it, they responded . . . and then it was a pleasure to stand at the bottom of the church after Benediction and see each face light up as it reflected my nod of good-night. After service to-night I was fairly mobbed by them in the street and found it difficult to say good-bye. Last of all to shake hands was A.B. of the *Collingwood*—and bless me if he didn't go down on both knees in the mud under the gas lamps and ask for my blessing. . . . Dear fellows! How splendid they are with their tremendous faith and generous hearts! so easily led, so hardly tempted, so genuine in their contrition, so grateful for the kind word. The coming retreat to impervious undergraduates will be depressing after a week with warm-hearted bluejackets."

I do not quote this as if Father Plater's experience were unique, or as if he were proved by it in any way unique. Sailors and soldiers have everywhere, I suppose, the same lovable qualities—perhaps human nature always possesses, somewhere, such qualities; and even "undergraduates" were not to prove "impervious" to Father Plater's affection and enthusiasm; and many another priest will have experienced the same glad response to God's word, spoken in pulpit or confessional, to hungry souls. But this was Father Plater's first attempt, as a priest, at this kind of work, and it is permissible to say, once at any rate, how he did it and what he felt about it.

He had already visited the *Amphitrite*, and on that Sunday he called on the Anglican chaplain of the *Orion*, who used generously to get up sub-

scriptions among his men for the Plymouth Sisters of Charity. The chaplain was on leave, but Father Plater was shown over the whole ship, and climbed as usual into the turret and conning tower, and noted down the number and the record of the guns.

“B. K. of the *Skipjack* . . . joined us. His leave began four days ago, and he has *lived* in the church ever since. Another great giant of a bluejacket spends eight or nine hours a day in church when ashore—kneeling motionless before Our Lady’s statue. God bless them all.”

Thence to London, where he does C.S.G. work, lectures on retreats, and goes to the new retreat house at Isleworth, being present when Cardinal Bourne came to bless it. He visits the House to hear Mr. John Burns and Mr. J. H. Thomas speak on rural housing and on railways, and returns to Isleworth to give a retreat to twenty men. In it the note he loved was struck, for, while fifteen of the men belonged to the Farm Street Sodality, one was a young Borough Councillor from Marylebone, described as “very socialistic,” but proving to be a “good sound fellow” after all, and yet another was a bricklayer lad with no collar. On the last day arrived an old man who had heard, Heaven knows how, of the retreat. He was met “prowling in the grounds—said he wanted to make a retreat—had been out of the Church for twenty-five years. . . . He subsequently sent £1 to bag a room for the next retreat.” Father Plater finally departed, leaving—shall I say, as usual?—his luggage on the station platform, returning from the next station to collect it, only to find that his late host had already done so, and had taken an intervening train to London. They ultimately met at

Earl's Court Station. I could spend a long time in describing the business it was to evict Father Plater from his room in time to make him catch the next train, at any rate, to the one he had decided to start by. Fleets of bicycles pursued him to the station with things he had forgotten, or to retrieve keys or other objects, essential to the survival of the house, with which he had absconded, or even to prevent his letting his train steam out under his eyes while he stood talking to a porter about wages.

The journey back to Ireland had its inevitable incident.

"At Cardiff a great crowd on the platform—the Irish International soccer team being sent back with great enthusiasm after beating Wales 3-2 . . . [At Waterford] found them again playing soccer on the platform. Chatted with one or two. Met them again at Maryboro', where we had a wait of two hours and where I got some dinner. Then they discovered that I was a Catholic priest—and the secretary, not a Catholic, came to ask if I would join them in their saloon for the rest of their journey. Did so and was introduced to the rest of those I had not met. Many were Orangemen, but all were most cordial. M., the centre forward, and H., another forward, stuck to me most of the time. T., the captain, an Ulsterman, was particularly nice. C., the trainer, a Lancashireman of no denomination, came and told me a succession of excellent stories . . . X., a Leeds agent, picking up football players, was of the party—a Catholic. F., the secretary, invited me to join them at tea on arrival at Dublin—at the Imperial Hotel, which I did, taking the head of a table. Much talk with M., a Connaught man, and a most lovable character. He showed me a little statue of Our Lady which he carried in every match—so do the rest of the Bohemians, including an Orangeman. Left them with regret—a fine set of fellows."

He arrived tired and remained so. But "loafing"—Tullamore elicits some of his rare comments on natural beauties; he has time to assimilate the "emeralds and browns of the bog, and great masses of golden furze"—rowing on the canal, reading Father Garrold's *Black Brotherhood*—"a glorious book—laughed and cried over it," quieted his nerves.

On May 6 he went to Dublin and spoke for an hour and ten minutes at a meeting arranged by the University College Conference of St. Vincent de Paul. Dr. Coffey, President of the National University, was in the chair.

The fate which besets most such events had fixed it on a night when there were already three important meetings elsewhere and an Irish festival; but he had an audience of two or three hundred, felt happy from the outset, was splendidly backed by the other speakers, and "it was evident from the way I was mobbed during the next half-hour that the lecture had got hold of the people."¹

The tertianship was running out and a pilgrimage to Clonmacnoise as it were put the seal on its special spiritual work. He brooded over those amazing ruins, not as mere food for his archæological instinct, but as a sanctifying memory and stimulus.

"Here is all that is left of a great intellectual centre—one of the glories of Europe for 1,004 years—a university with its 3,000 students—the home of countless saints 'whose prayers would make hell itself a heaven,' as the chronicler says. Here came scholars from England and France—here came Alcuin. . . . I knelt in Ciaran's chapel, and prayed for his zeal and thirst for holiness."

¹ A full report may be found in the *Irish Catholic*, May 11, 1912, and it has been, I think, reprinted by the Irish C.T.S.

On July 19 he began the last retreat of the tertianship, and left Tullabeg on August 1. By way of Dublin, where he met many old friends, including his International centre forward, he returned to England, happy yet regretful. Henceforward he was never to be alone. If, so far, he had not won what was enough to live by, he would find, apart from the ceaseless enrichments of God's grace, no source from which to refresh his spiritual vitality. He would have to be *giving*, all the time—leading an outward life; beaten upon, distracted to sheer bewilderment, feeling himself downright dazed among the plaudits, and too driven to be able to assess the criticisms, to listen to the warnings. But won he had, and enough, for the accustomed use of prayer had become a necessity to him; he could not but pray; it would have been the harder course to rely upon himself; and when that is so, tired body and jaded brain cannot check the divine activity.

At once, on August 2, Father Plater went to Norwich for the Third National Catholic Congress. It was to have its special function of aiding the Catholic revival in the Eastern Counties, and was necessarily different in consequence from the great manifestations of the North, where Catholics abound. The very smallness of the place precluded any vast influx of outsiders, and the local Catholics were very few. Yet it does not seem as if Father Plater had any less work to do. At 10 on the 3rd he read a paper to the Catholic Reading Guild, which was so well received that Father Bans at once rose and suggested that it be printed and a copy sent to every priest in the country, while Mr. Bartlett of the Art and Book Company offered to finance this enterprise.

At 2.30 Mgr. Benson and Father Plater were speakers at a rather agitated C.T.S. assembly, and at 5 "much useful work was got through" at a C.S.G. committee meeting. It was decided that Father Plater was to edit the next *Year-book* and draw up a memorandum on "Women's Work and Wages."

The finished product looked slight enough, but there again it bears no relation to the enormous mass of material he had to collect, condense, and combine.

There was also an official lunch given by the Mayor, and an official dinner given by the late Duke of Norfolk, whose presence attracted a number of Catholics from groups not heavily represented as a rule at National Catholic Congresses. The Duke was, in fact, so overwhelmed by the magnificence of some of his guests that, he afterwards remarked, he had tried when saying good-bye to kiss the ring of one very stately layman.

When Father Plater rose at the Sunday afternoon meeting of the C.W.L., which up till then had evoked but a mild interest, he received "a cheer that astonished me and put me in good spirits." "Is *this* your idea," he began "of a Pleasant Sunday Afternoon?" The next day the C.S.G. had its meeting, and here, too, discordant elements made themselves perceived, but when, it appears, a speaker tried "to draw a red herring across us, I nipped it in the bud." More untoward incidents, in fact, confused this congress than any hitherto, but it concluded, at the final mass meeting, by a superb speech by Mr. Belloc, which effaced all less pleasant memories, and there was "wild enthusiasm in the streets" when the Cardinal drove off.

From Norwich Father Plater went, on the 7th, to St. Joseph's, Glasgow, where he was to do parish work till September.

He had not the least idea of treating so transitory a post as negligible, but started the very next day to study his district, which contained about 2,000 Catholics, mostly very poor, and henceforward he notes daily his hours spent in visiting: $5\frac{1}{2}$, $7\frac{1}{2}$, 8—never, I think, less than 4. Thus, on one Saturday he briefly notes: "6 hours visiting; 6 hours confessions." I need not say that he spoke at every imaginable society, both men's and women's; took part in the ordinary school and other festivities, during one of which he had his first lesson on the bagpipes; and preached a course of four sermons on the "Church and the Worker," after one of which fifteen dozen copies of Leo XIII's Encyclical, *Rerum Novarum*, were sold at the church door, and twelve dozen after the next, with other "social" literature. He started at least one study club.

One good consequence of this month in Glasgow was that Father Plater obtained some notion—slight, perhaps, yet enough for so active an imagination—of what the work of the parish priest might very well involve. It exacts of a man qualities quite different from those of a missionary or giver of retreats merely; the parish priest has no meteoric career of triumphs. Father Plater was to know intimately, and to love and be loved by, very many of these men, vowed to the task of monotonous well-doing, but he was all the better for having his experience enriched by living, if but for a little, as they lived. And even so, he had not their financial anxiety, nor yet the loneliness of many among them; but financial anxiety was to come later, in other

ways; and Father Plater was always, you may say, lonely.

Another great thing gained by him during this time was that he made acquaintance in Glasgow with many Catholics who held sociological opinions quite different from his own, and with a good many men who, owing to Socialist propaganda, had ceased to be Catholics. The Catholic Socialist Society had energetic members of whom he saw a good deal, whom he admired, and with whom he felt that co-operation should by no means be for ever out of the question. In some cases he found men who were clever indeed, but doctrinaire and "narrow in their line"; "knowing nothing of social action abroad, little of history, and given to the *idée fixe*." From such he himself learned much, and obtained a mass of experience on which to test his principles. He always began by making friends, then cleared away misconceptions, then "got down to root questions." He often took such men round his district; they were struck "by how much religion does mean to these people and how the Sacraments do compensate for bare feet."

A vast problem is suggested here; at least, I cannot but think that this month at Glasgow, coming just when it did, was of immense service to Father Plater and gave much body to his ideas, and saved him from any tendency to be absorbed in theory or in organization, which might have been accentuated in the somewhat sheltered position he was now to occupy and in the scattered kind of life he was to lead thereafter.

Chapter VIII
ST. MARY'S HALL :
WIMBLEDON

September 1912—January 1916

“Dixi, nunc coepi.”

(i)

IT must have been difficult for Father Plater to know what to think when he learnt that he was to go to St. Mary's Hall to teach psychology. I do not expect that it made matters much better that he felt he was given to understand that he went only as a stopgap. It is easier to settle down to a job, even unpleasant, when you know that it definitely *is* your job ; but to put much heart into what may not, after all, last for more than a short time, and to sacrifice one's natural occupation to so problematical a future, is difficult. He certainly did know that he was not well up in scholastic psychology as such : to prepare his lectures adequately would mean a very heavy and none too congenial labour. And he would feel disloyal if he “let himself go” over the aspects of psychology that interested him the most. Moreover, he would be very tied. He would find it difficult to move about ; he would have to give up a good many dreams.

He drove up to Whalley “pondering many things,” but with his mind at rest, for he was realizing in a special way “the Fatherliness of God.”

Of his actual teaching I need say little, save that he tried as usual to read much outlying matter, and to keep at least aware of what modern research was doing, and even attempted a little experimental

psychology with the help of a fellow-professor.¹ He shared in all the picnics and expeditions of the students, exhumed his 'cello, played in concerts at the Hall, the College, and the village schools, and found a devoted assistance in many of the men, who did typing and other secretarial work for him. He renewed, too, acquaintance with many of his old almshouse congregation, and took Holy Communion to sick persons, noting down the joy it was to him to carry the Blessed Sacrament. The "extraordinary kindness" of the men who worked with him was born of and reduplicated the real affection

¹ Charles Plater had odd powers over his awareness. Thus he was able, as far as I could understand him, to unfocus his eyes, or rather, shift his mental construction of the data of sight, and could make himself see things quite differently from what they should normally have appeared. Thus he could assume, as it were, that an ordinary house was only six feet high; instantly he would feel himself to be about an inch tall, and men and women would become to him microscopic; or he could assume that everything was upside down, and then trees would seem to him to be hanging from a roof, and he could get quite panic-stricken on account of people walking along a road. He could not see why they did not drop off. He used to do this, at any rate, when studying at Oxford. I have no reason to suppose he went on playing these tricks with his eyes and his mind, though I know that he did try similar odd experiments with himself when he was teaching psychology; but I never would discuss them with him because I thought they were probably unhealthy for both of us. But this ability to shift suddenly and completely his mental perspective was of a certain spiritual value to him in two ways. First, he could neglect almost totally what the senses exhibited to him, and make himself aware of just *forces acting in matter*—for example, he could see a tree as a sort of violent explosion issuing from the soil; or he could see a man as a spiritual force holding together particles of matter, or whirling eddies in matter, into a strange shape. This really had its use when he wanted to concentrate on the soul rather than on the concrete individual. He was also able to abstract himself from his surroundings very easily when he wanted to pray.

which he, as ever, came to feel for them. He expresses this with almost startling emphasis on January 16, 1913 :

“The *Mikado* in the evening. A real treat. I have never enjoyed a seminary play so much—which is saying a great deal. It was certainly very well done—even the weaker men came out wonderfully. [He mentions a few names.] It had the unanalysable note of poignancy that seizes one by the throat. Of course, the plot suffered in adaptation—but it didn’t seem to matter. It was more than compensation to have it played by the dear ‘Giovani,’ whom I love and whose lives are so closely bound up with my own in God’s loving providence. Somehow this aspect of it lifted up the whole thing for me and gave me a rare pleasure very close to tears. It was quite a *κάθαρσις*¹ of a helpful sort. The dear A. was a most unconventional executioner—arrayed like a Viking chief—full of strenuous good nature and high spirits. B., a stately Mikado, dressed like a Peruvian general . . . God bless ’em all, and help me to help them as much as I love them. And so to bed.”

It was this element of an ever-springing, personal, warm, and sincere affection which, on the human side, prevented Father Plater’s work from ever being that of a mere official, however zealous or energetic.

I add a few lines which show how he impressed one, at least, of his younger companions :

“When first I met him he was already somewhat of a celebrity, and I rather a shy seminarian. I did not attend his lectures, but within a few weeks found my way to his room to consult him on some point of the observance of the rules. At once I found him different from anyone I have

¹ *Purging*. Aristotle says that a good tragedy should effect a spiritual purification or alleviation of the emotions.

ever known. He seemed immediately to sweep away all the preliminary stages of an acquaintance. There was no consciousness of an effort to be kind or nice, no suggestion of that secret awareness of that difference in our positions—though the difference was very great—but an immediate welcome and acceptance of me on an affectionate and almost intimate basis. An immediate revelation of himself—simple, strong, kind. He let me do odd jobs for him, clerical work for his social guild, correcting proofs, etc. When he went away I used to pack his bag for him. He was fond of regarding himself as hopelessly unpractical—would laugh over the state of his wardrobe and protest that left to himself he would never have a collar or a suit fit to wear, and indeed he was quite careless of his personal appearance.

“Even then I realized his independence of rules or theories of life. There was about him a certain magnificence, freedom of judgment, and outlook that made one feel that he was never judging things by convention merely, but that almost instinctively he penetrated into the true meaning of each situation as it arose. He acted with the assurance that his generous instinct would prove right: I doubt whether most men can trust their instinct in this way. . . . Not that this freedom of mind made him indifferent to or contemptuous of rules of conduct. Indeed, the moment he became aware of their presence he would be extraordinarily punctilious in carrying them out. I noted the exact care with which he always approached superiors for leave and approval of anything he had in hand. I was amazed when he confided to me that a minor official of the house accused his social interests as distracting the younger men from their proper work. He at once approached his superiors with an offer to give up the social work altogether if they preferred. He did this cheerfully and without sarcasm or feeling himself downtrodden, albeit he knew quite well that as psychology professor he was merely a stopgap. He laughed at the idea of his having to teach it at all. Indeed, I do not believe his lectures were very good. I was often in his room when he prepared them. He led a hand-

to-mouth existence, being only a little ahead of his class, but I could not but admire the ease and sureness of judgment with which he mastered the subject. When the bell rang he would gather his books together and then explain rapidly 'I must first say, Good-morning,' and then hurry off to the chapel for a visit. From others I learn that in the lecture-room he was stimulating rather than satisfying. I believe he had no capacity in argument. I always felt, in fact, that he shunned it. Persuasive, inspiring, yes; even, he could answer difficulties; but direct controversy, no. He shrank from it. In face of direct opposition to his views, too, he would be silent or change the subject.

"I realized, before the year was over, his astounding capacity for work, his utter unselfishness; but I could never understand the principle on which he co-ordinated the mass of new duties that every day brought with it. Yet I have never seen him flurried or overwhelmed. And the work was uncongenial—scissors, paste, old files of newspapers—it was quite foreign to his almost poetical idealism. . . . I came quickly to the conclusion that he was far from an expert, in this sense at least, that while he applied his mind courageously to theories, he seemed to attach no value to any of them, but flung them aside for the sake of the concrete as soon as possible. His real social work was done directly on the souls of men and women, whether he actually met them or not. The unselfishness this implied was not too hard for him, as is well proved by his generous flinging of his literary possessions to his friends, who published, not under his name, what he had in fact prepared. His printed volumes are far from being his most spontaneous and 'Plateresque' work. Indeed, this flinging forth of work to be done by others often enough provoked some comment. He has been called 'utterly inconsiderate for his friends.' He once said to me: 'People say that I have too many irons in the fire, and that I have a disconcerting way of taking one out and handing it to a friend and leaving him with it. . . .' And it is true that he would rush people into doing a job and

then leave them with it to struggle their way through. This meant, not callousness, but that he could trust them—trust their initiative, and also their loyalty in part to himself, but still more to the ideal which he himself possessed, and which he was fain to believe was also theirs. It meant also that his work, which he felt had to be done, had got altogether beyond one man's grasp. And you have to realize that to the end of his life he never had an official secretary. . . . Every avenue he embarked upon branched out this way and that the moment he set foot in it. Each post brought new and urgent sorts of work, and he felt himself hurried along without the chance of reflecting. Before his life ended I realized how completely he was at the mercy of circumstances."

Sunday, February 2, 1913, he took his final vows at Beaumont College, having made his retreat at St. Mary's Hall. He had prefaced his retreat with this note :

"Retreat begins to-morrow. Please God it will be a good one. There is so much to be done—and I seem to do nothing but harm. Well, we'll start again with God's grace."

Long before this, however, he had begun to extend his activities beyond Stonyhurst.¹ The field was, of course, familiar, and within a fortnight of his arrival at St. Mary's Hall he had made his way to Preston. On October 2 he was there again for a big C.S.G. meeting at which fifty-two new members were enrolled, and again on October 13, November 26, and on December 19 of that year, bicycling as a rule to and fro—too heavy a strain on him, for the fourteen miles are hilly. I will not catalogue the rest of his visits there, but will only mention that the most substantial piece of work connected with

¹ I do not in this chapter propose to allude, however, to such expeditions as occurred after his departure for Oxford.

that town occurred in the January of 1915, when a C.S.G. forward movement was being developed there. Father Plater addressed the Catholic Charitable Society upon this movement on January 26, and on the 30th entertained several C.S.G. members from Preston and elsewhere at Stonyhurst, after which he motored to Burnley, and had a meeting of about 500, with members of several northern study-clubs present. I draw no invidious comparisons when I say that Preston remained always loyal to the work of the C.S.G., and that it was a recurrent pleasure to Father Plater to go there.

It was natural that he should look much towards the great Catholic population of Liverpool, with its special and appalling problems, its admirable organization, its record of constructive reform, especially in the matter of housing, soon to be carried forward by C.S.G. effort, and the goodwill of the late Archbishop Whiteside to call him thither. On December 18 he spoke there to almost 400 men at a C.S.G. meeting, and thenceforward frequently returned. One of his favourite objectives was the Cenacle Convent at Wavertree, where he gave days' retreats to teachers, working girls, the C.W.L., and other women's groups; and in February 1913 he was asked by the Rector of Stonyhurst to draw up an appeal, to all who might be interested, for the Stonyhurst settlement in Liverpool. The scheme was never very successful, though the ideal, as we have seen, had long been his. I cannot mark down the date at which the letter to Mr. B. Devas, of which the following is an extract, was written. It belongs to a much earlier period (perhaps 1908), but it serves to express his ideas on the subject. It must be remembered that the whole idea of settlements

was still unfamiliar to the mass of Catholic laymen, at any rate, and particularly was it unfamiliar in the north, and established enterprises absorbed most of their spare energies. The Settlement, which was in fact begun, led a rather languishing existence at the best of times, and the war quite killed it.

"I am not really much surprised that the circular . . . has had little result. The whole idea of settlement work means nothing to 99 per cent. . . . and the odd hundredth is as likely as not to be hard up. One of the main functions of the settlement will be to interest our old boys in such things. That is why, like yourself, I have always been in favour of slow growth from small beginnings. Yet I would not definitely limit my horizon to a club. A settlement I do believe is wanted, but it must be grown, and the precise lines of growth cannot be arranged or foreseen at once.

"It is wanted because we want a place where we can send our big boys during their holidays to spend a day and pick up ideas. With St. Mary's Hall, i.e. future masters, now keen on the thing, the settlement would be sure of such visitors who would later develop into supporters. . . .

"An excellent beginning would be three or four men in digs at Hoxton. H. objects that some people would back a settlement who would not enthuse about a humdrum club. But if they were sensible they would know that a settlement must grow, and it might be made clear to them that a settlement and not a humdrum club is the *τέλος* [goal]. . . . I don't see any reason for discouragement. It would, I think, be a thousand pities to go back and drop the settlement idea. It would be very difficult to pick it up again later on. Yet on the other hand one makes the whole thing sound visionary and unpracticable if one talks at this early stage of 'similar institutions in every big town.' . . . There is a positive advantage in smallness of numbers at first: it is like a sodality, which is ruined by pressing a mob into it at first. One has to create a positive state of mind which

will inform new members as they are slowly added. So I don't believe that circulars and advertisements will bring in recruits at first—and it is well they should not. This is only my idea and may be all wrong."

Rather later, in May, the C.Y.M.S., at a great conference in Liverpool, passed a resolution in favour of study-clubs, which appeared likely to provide "a very large accession of strength to the C.S.G." At the same conference two representative members of the Liverpool University discussed with him a scheme for a Catholic University Students' Association, for which he in fact spoke the inaugural address in presence of some eighty members, on June 25. He says he "rambled on for half an hour . . . not good, but I was dog-tired." He had concluded a C.S.G. retreat at Romiley that morning. But the Catholic Society in the University of Liverpool has thriven, and has done admirable work ever since, and looks back with gratitude to Father Plater's interest in its origin.

Another great Liverpool centre that remained his very good friend was, need I say, Mount Pleasant Training College. For the spirit of enterprise and the width of outlook that he found among the Sisters of Notre Dame, he developed the greatest admiration.

It was not long, however, before he saw reason to cultivate as far as possible the immediate neighbourhood of Stonyhurst, which contained so many mining or manufacturing towns, and needed all the encouragement and direction that could be given it. He began with Clitheroe, a town four miles distant from Stonyhurst. Success at once befriended him. After the first four sermons on *The Church and the Worker*, eight dozen copies of the

Rerum Novarum were sold on the spot—"we could have done with twice the number"—and after the third, preached, despite severe laryngitis, two dozen C.S.G. Year-books. In a month he had collected seventeen men to form a study-club, the secretary being a quarryman, the rest, "tailors, calico-printers, and members of other trades." From then on, he kept in close touch with Clitheroe, and I may say once for all that when he went thus to a town he very soon visited and appreciated its schools, its special industries, its organizations. He descends coal-mines; he examines looms; he watches glass-blowing; and keeps notes of systems used in municipal lodging-houses and the like. Nothing escaped him.

It is true that at the end of 1912 he paid a crowded visit to Glasgow to lecture to the Catholic Social Reform Association on "The Training of the Layman," and made some other substantial expeditions to which I shall briefly recur; but, as I said, he fixed his will on to getting into thoroughly intimate touch with his environment. After Clitheroe came Padiham; then Blackburn; then Burnley. Here study-clubs were begun before next November in no less than three parishes: after a Burnley visit on October 26, at the first meeting of the Rose Grove study-club, he notes that he and its members "did the first three pages of the Primer together."

"They are very enthusiastic. F. said that there were hundreds of Catholic young men in Lancashire whom I had stirred up and made disciples of, though they had never seen me."

Of his estimate of these little panegyrics I must speak in another chapter. The St. Mary's Club at Burnley started with no less than thirty-eight

members; and the formal meetings always ended with long friendly conversations. The evening was, as often as not, concluded, alas! by the note:

“Biked home in pouring rain: arrived at 10 [or 11 or 12]; got some dry toast and water. Said office; wrote letters; and so to bed.”

I have added a detail or two about the Burnley clubs, and no more than mention Wesham, Accrington, and Great Harwood, Darwen and Osbaldeston. I cannot, however, but say that at the study-club he started at Osbaldeston, out of a congregation of 230 Catholics, half farm labourers, half mill-hands, 34 men gave in their names as desirous to join it. It is not that I imply that the response he met was more enthusiastic there than here, or the work more permanent; but because, as I said, this sort of detailed description tends necessarily to become monotonous, and statistics are better suited to the history of the C.S.G., to which we look forward, than to a biography. So much only should be said as may give a massive impression of Father Plater's work, that so an adequate impression of the man himself may be gained.

Further afield, he visited Leeds, though on C.W.L. business rather than on C.S.G. work. After his speech there on March 7, he wrote with simplicity:

“My speech, though carefully prepared, went badly. I don't know why. Never got hold of the audience. Something wrong with matter or manner or both. *Deo Gratias*. Perhaps it will do more good that way—anyhow to me. And *Deus providebit* as regards the cause.”

To Ancoats he went on April 30, and it was there that a unifying programme of study was suggested, and it was settled that all study-clubs should during

the autumn consider the topic of the Living Wage, and, at a big meeting in the spring, pool their results. It will at once be realized how directly this method tends to create a public opinion, of which the acquired results may be relied on. Its only danger was, that once a subject had been "thrashed out" it might be regarded as finished with, and its decisions fail thus to be revised in changing circumstances. However, this was certainly the way to reach and diffuse principles to which all might give allegiance.

In Manchester itself he received, naturally, a warm welcome at the Cenacle Convent; and in the neighbourhood again, Oldham, Wigan, St. Helens, Chorley, Bolton, Gorton, are names that constantly recur. All these visits reveal a permanent element—the kindness of the clergy; the note always comes, "Mgr. X, Canon Y, Fr. Z, most hospitable"; and the enthusiasm of his audience, "Fine fellows! splendid stuff! most cheery crew!" Each too seems to have its special little adventure and its grace; and at this point I have begun seriously to ask myself whether it was not Providence which engineered that Father Plater should so constantly lose his bag, in order that he might meet a porter, or cloak-room official, or chauffeur, who had lost his faith. "We made friends," says the diary always: "a first step." And probably, six months later, "Dear lad! The Hound of Heaven has run him down at last."

I will make no complete list of the retreats he gave during the first part of this period; one particularly pleasant experience, however, was the second retreat given to the St. Philip's boys at Torquay, where he spent the Easter of 1913, at which time he also paid flying visits to Ruskin

College, Oxford; to Isleworth, where he found twenty men in retreat; to the Catholic Settlement in Commercial Road, London; and gave another retreat to ladies at the Cenacle of Stamford Hill. Another retreat which gave him special joy was at Oakwood, beginning June 21; he lists his exercitants as follows: "1 alderman; 1 councillor; 4 university graduates, Oxford, Liverpool, Manchester; several dock-labourers; a labour-exchange official; weavers and clerks; chartered accountant; land-owner; quarryman, etc."

Nor can I try to give accurate details of his literary output. The *Year-book* was a constant preoccupation, of course: "It has been a heavy job," he notes in November 1913, "done this year in circumstances of peculiar difficulty. . . . A trying three weeks!" Else, it was a book on priests and Social Action for the Westminster Series which was his main production. It never satisfied him, and as he wrote his spirits sank. "I'm beginning to have a horrid suspicion that it's beyond me, and that I've bitten off more than I can chew."¹

I must content myself with singling out a few episodes which prolonged their effects into later years, and marked new departures.

The first is his visit to Gateshead, July 7 to September 11, 1913.

He went there via Leeds and Market Weighton, where he saw over the Training School for Boys worked by the Christian Brothers. "An excellent place," he writes, "with a genius at its head; printing, bootmakers, tailors, etc., music galore."

At Gateshead he began by meeting "four ragged

¹ Published by Messrs. Longmans; pp. xi, 266. It remains of permanent utility.

paper-boys at station—three of them Catholics! An omen.” He proceeded to Whinney House, which he had not yet seen. This was the retreat house which had been opened in the diocese of Hexham and Newcastle; its career, as we shall see, began most successfully; during the war, when retreats were so difficult, it was lent as a military hospital; afterwards expense made it impossible to keep it up, and it has had to be closed. This was a real disaster, and we have heard the loudest laments from the priests of that diocese. The Catholic population of those parts is, of course, very numerous indeed, and of the very quality which Father Plater was so anxious to see in retreat, and came, after the first spell of hesitation, most willingly.

However, Father Plater, on arriving, did not foresee this. He was delighted with the place, and on the 19th began a retreat “to two men! and one of these left on the Monday, suffering from nervous prostration! Much chaff,” he notes in his diary. “Then,” he wrote to Mother St. Ethelbert, of La Retraite, Clapham, “I said to Our Lord, ‘This is Your job, not mine!’ And next week, the house was full! Last summer they had 600 men.”

He had, in fact, passed the week as follows. On the Sunday evening he preached at the Cathedral on Retreats: “church full—fine lot of men. Clergy most kind.” He spent Wednesday the 14th at Ushaw. On Friday, Whinney House was solemnly blessed by the Bishop, and on the 26th he began a retreat to thirteen men; on August 2, to twenty-three; on the 9th, to eight; on the 24th, to eleven; on the 30th, to twenty-two; on September 6th, to twenty-two. In the intervals he recruited. On July 29 he preached to 200 men at Jarrow;

“captured four in the sacristy”; at Walker on August 7; on the 10th at all three Masses at South Shields, and addressed the National Irish Club the same afternoon in Newcastle—this was *during* a retreat! At Blaydon on the 12th; at Felling on the 14th; at the Convent of Marie Réparatrice, where he clothed a novice, on the 15th; at Blackhill on the 21st—“captured a man for retreat in the train on the way there!”—at Weekenton on the 24th, as well as giving the morning retreat talks that day and again in the afternoon at 4; preached at St. Michael’s in the evening and gave the concluding talk to the men at 9.15. On September 4 he preached at Leadgate, Broome, and lectured after the sermon. Besides this, he made a rapid round of visits to the clergy and to laymen; addressed the committee of the C.Y.M.S. at Gateshead; the Catenians in Newcastle, in the presence of the Lord Mayor, who was himself a Catenian, and of several aldermen, and the Catholic Trades Unionists at a large meeting—his lecture lasted an hour and a half, and a study-club was formed on the spot;—and to the C.Y.M.S. at Gateshead, about 200 strong. He also received large groups at Whinney House, besides visitors singly and in couples; thus on August 16, “despite lumbago and a splitting headache,” he showed more than twenty men from Gateshead and Felling round the house, gave them a lecture on retreats and social work, helped in their impromptu concert on the lawn, encouraged them to form study-clubs, and started a retreat that evening. On the 23rd about eighty men arrived with the Lord Mayor and the Deputy Lord Mayor (not a Catholic, but keenly interested in retreats): the Lord Mayor addressed the men; they, too, gave an impromptu concert; and,

as usual, left only after saying a decade of the Rosary in the chapel and singing "Faith of our Fathers." On the 30th twenty-five members of the Irish National Club and a dozen others arrived : "talk ; tea ; and Irish concert." On the 31st, "surprise visit paid by twenty-five men from various parts of Newcastle," including some of the leading Catholic trade unionists, anxious to be addressed on study-clubs. Will it be believed that besides this he wrote two articles for the *Tablet* and two for the *Catholic Times*, revised the Westminster book, and wrote his daily dozen letters ?

I have made this catalogue, even so, not exhaustive, since it is the only way of conveying a clear notion of what such a "tour" as the first Gateshead one implied. But lest it be somehow felt that it meant, after all, a frightful rush of heartless business, let me remind readers that through it all, and not merely in retreats, Father Plater was making his men feel what from the very first I said, that he loved them. He did not merely stimulate and organize them. Now to experience and create such passionate sympathy invigorates the spirit, but more than all else exhausts the psychic and even the physical part of a man. "I have food to eat you know not of," said Our Lord, as He sat exhausted by the well ; and He would not eat what they brought Him. His heart exulted at the sight of fields white already for the harvest. But we may dare to think that when He lay down to rest that night, if even then He rested, He did so with a body weary almost "unto death." I will quote a tiny episode, of which the hero will be recognized only by himself, but by himself with gratitude.

Father Plater had heard of X, a young miner, who

had recently returned from the bleak places of Socialist Agnosticism to his Faith. Father Plater, eager to make his acquaintance, trained to his home and found him cleaning his bicycle in the cottage yard. His brother Y, just changing his clothes to go on a night shift at the pit, and his mother were also there—"A bit grim at first," but they soon made friends. "A very fine pair of lads, of whom much might, and I think with God's grace *will*, be made. I should be sorry to lose sight of them." X walked and talked long with Father Plater, who, on his way, had said "many prayers for him in the train," and wrote on his return, in his diary, in Latin: "Oh Lord, to Thee I commit the souls of my friends X and his brother, that they may ever remain and grow in Thy grace and offer Thee, for Thy sake alone, their special gifts." Next day X came to call on Father Plater, but his brother, who should have come too, was absent.

"Much talk about apologetics, retreats, etc. . . . Then I asked X if he would come to the retreat next Saturday. . . . He wavered . . . said doubtfully that he would consult Y. Finally he said he wouldn't, and nothing would move him. If he comes now it will be the sheer grace of God! *Utinam!* I don't know whether I have pushed him too much or too little. God forgive me, anyhow. If I was better myself I might have had the grace to get hold of him. Now I can only pray and get prayers. X's refusal has saddened me all the evening. But I hope it has thrown me back on God."

God was a safe resort. In the margin, two notes, in red ink, are added:

"Feb. 23, 1914, X made a retreat with deep fervour at Oakwood Hall. *Te Deum Laudamus*. And now, dear Lord, for Y!"

"July 1914. Y made fervent retreat at Gateshead. DEO GRATIAS."

The record of the Gateshead visit ends thus, on September 10 :

"Departure of my last retreat family—quite heart-breaking—some of them broke down altogether when saying good-bye. . . . Looked in at C.Y.M.S. concert at Gateshead. Home again."

Two encounters during this period were of lasting importance to him : one with Father W. Doyle, an old friend, but now definitely possessed with the desire to inaugurate working-men's retreats in Ireland ; and one which occurred on December 23, when Father Plater was on his way to Edinburgh :

"At Hellifield got into train with interesting-looking man and his valet, D. It turned out to be Sidney Parry—convert, Oxford man, one of the pioneers of the Newman Society, Newman House, and various social schemes such as an Oxford Summer School for Catholics. . . . We talked much and I hope to see more of him."

From this time forward the friendship grew apace, and Mr. Parry was of incalculable service to Father Plater in many C.S.G. enterprises. At Edinburgh Father Plater gave a retreat to St. Catherine's Convent, and on Christmas Day *danced*, at the Little Sisters of the Poor, "with an old lady of 93"! St. Ignatius, who, despite his game leg, danced to please a neurasthenic theologian, must have smiled approval.

On the first day of the fateful year 1914 Father Plater returned. The diary makes this grisly observation :

"Dull journey back. Small child in carriage who began by being obstreperous and ended by being sick—VERY."

Already in March 1913 during a visit on C.S.G. business to Birmingham, he had become obsessed with the idea that there too retreats for men should be started. He called to see Mother St. Paul, Superioress of the Sisters of the Sacred Heart of the Retreat, who had a house where retreats for working girls were given. At the time, nothing else was done, though he delivered "an informal talk" and a lecture at Oscott. But in April 1914 he returned, and discussed a definite scheme with some influential laymen there and at Leamington, where Canon Barry supported the idea energetically. After a retreat given at the London Cenacle, and the ordinary Easter one at Torquay—Mr. Sidney Parry wired to be allowed to go with him to this—"a dear fellow! how many there are in the world! We talked and talked . . ."—he returned to Birmingham, and Mgr. Parkinson approved of retreats at Oscott, at any rate to begin with, and the Archbishop blessed the scheme. The Oratory promised its help and a committee was formed.

He went back to Stonyhurst—you will remember that all this was going on *during* his spell of teaching there, chiefly, of course, during the vacations—but such were Father Plater's vacations—"talked in the train to X of Blackburn—factory tailor—æt. 30—non-Catholic—just married—intelligent, fine character. Saw blind man to his house at Blackburn, as I had half an hour to wait and he was stranded. Found sick man at his home. Charming porter, named Z, with the most smiling of faces—honest Yorkshire, talked much with me of life, passengers, and religion—and took me to see the signal-box." He returned after two days only to Birmingham, enlarged the committee, lectured to the Brothers

of the Little Oratory on retreats, of which he hoped to have secured five for the next summer, went back to Birmingham, talked to Catenians, and was told that 800 invitations had been sent out and posters distributed. He went home happy.

I will say at once that the first Birmingham retreat occurred at Oscott, from July 25 to 29, and the second began the same night and lasted till August 3, attended by forty-eight and thirty-six men respectively. Readers will realize something of the thoroughness with which these retreats were made when I remind them that when, during the second, on August 2, the news came that Germany had declared war on France, many of the retreatants, to whom the state of the Stock Exchange meant much, refrained from getting newspapers or from initiating any inquiry into the state of things till the retreat was over. Then, I confess, there was a stampede. But I regard that August as marking a real division in Father Plater's life, for of necessity quite other interests then entered it.

(ii)

After this anxious retreat he went to Manresa to make his own. In his notes upon it I seem to see that it was an important one, and meant by God to prepare him for the work which should so change the current of his life and should last till very nearly its end. Can anyone have anywhere lived the war through and come out unchanged? I do not know. There are many certainly who found their whole mind altered, aged, refreshed, I know not what else, by those mysterious years. The work within Charles Plater's life was deep. I feel convinced that you

may watch the beginning of it in the notes on this retreat. They start—what shall I say?—almost journalistically :

“ August 7. Fourth day of the retreat finished. Much light and grace, D.G.

“ But what distractions—or possibly helps ! To-day as I offer myself with what ardour I can for ‘ signal service ’ a bugle rings out in the park. As I sit at my window in the afternoon reading the Life of St. Louis of France the page grows dark—I look up and there is a great airship quite close to me : the men wave. My meditations are punctuated by shots. I presume they come from volunteers, not from Germans. And the cocks and hens have caught the war fever and are unceasing in their raucous comments.”

What war-correspondent is this, writing at top-speed what trivial impressions ?

But a deeper gravity formed itself within him as the retreat advanced.

“ Fifth day of this strange retreat. Make the best of the remaining three. Avoid curiosity as to the progress of the war. Guard senses. . . . *Vince teipsum*. So much to be done. I am undisciplined in heart . . . a great work. Would help others so much. Think of those who look to me and depend on me. I must help them. Victim—like Gemma Galgani. I have not begun this yet. Think of the big world-battle, of which this war is only a symbol.”

Thus he was realizing what it took years of horrible experience to drive into the consciousness of others—that the heroic and dreadful deeds of war were but crude, almost algebraic, formulæ of sublime and appalling thoughts and feelings ; and that these themselves were but spectres of the battle between

Heaven and Hell, unguessed by nearly all, in each man's soul.

"*Two standards.* I must make more of this meditation. I need it. My methods all wrong. I must come back to A B C of Jesuit drill. I have been helping the enemy poisoning the wells of my own side. Using God's armour against Him. . . . Surrendering to the natural always—dangerous. . . . St. Louis's high sense of justice, honour, generosity. His humility. (Woman calls out that his reign is a misfortune for France. He will not defend it.)

"I don't think of my Angel enough. Do I ever think of my Devil? He hates me. He is ever at watch—clever. Knows my weak points. Tries to induce my will to . . . honour (praise-incense), pride. I hardly need his temptation. If private detective . . . I am watched, spied upon. No sense of honour in the spy.

"*Three classes.* Great test. How easy it is to slip into the first class, while smothering conscience. [One says to one's self] 'I must really look into this—this must be got right. I'll take it for my Partic. Exam. etc.'

"[But] nothing is done, yet somehow I think I have done wonders and really grappled with it.

"This is really a light on my own temperament. I persuade myself that things are as I want them to be; foolish optimism—won't face facts."

He is impressed by Father Baltazar Alvares's direction of St. Teresa, in particular in the matter of special friendships and in her tendency to hurry. She writes, asking an immediate answer. The answer comes immediately; but he writes on the envelope, "Not to be opened for a month." She writhed, but obeyed.

On the seventh day he writes :

"If my retreats and sermons, etc., are to do people any good at all, they must be delivered from the cross. What

mortifications do I undertake on behalf of those who look to me and confide in me ? ”

To “ mortify ” himself for this intention was indeed his practice. Those who look back with gratitude towards his retreats and ministrations must recall that there was much else behind the talk, the enthusiasm, the geniality.

Eighth day :

“ Alas, there has been much negligence and sloth. But God has been ever so good. Quite enough to go on with . . .

“ I am now so much worse than I thought : perhaps I could not endure to see what I really am. God will break it to me by degrees. The thought of being a victim for God, suffering with Jesus for the souls of others, has come back to me frequently. It might seem presumptuous seeing what I am. Yet I think Our Lord desires to give me this favour. . . . But I see that my life has become very much disorganized. I must get it into order, be systematic, mortify myself.”

I think I may say that so far he had indeed been generous in service : henceforward, he was to be complete in sacrifice.

After his retreat he went by way of Coventry, new ground, I think, to Birmingham, and gave a retreat to thirty-one men, this time at Wheeley’s Road. Among the thirty-one, no less than six were of one name and family, the father, his two sons, his brother, and two nephews ! Another followed on August 26 to twenty-six men. The next was the famous retreat of August 29, when forty men arrived, announced or unannounced, and had to be fitted into a house that could conveniently hold twenty. They were stowed away as best might be ; they fed in the corridors ; they slept on deck chairs—three in

Father Plater's own room. Mother St. Paul, the superioress, worked her accustomed wonders, and no one starved. It is true that some Birmingham laymen, interested in retreats, sent presents of food to each retreat, of which the last, to thirty-six men, began on September 5. Meanwhile Father Plater had visited half Birmingham; and it was through this month's unremitting local toil, together with the co-operation he met with on the part of so many of the clergy and laity alike, that the whole retreat movement collected such impetus in that city.

I find that he is already being consulted about war-problems—in particular that of Belgian refugee children, heavily proselytized; and of the Catholic girl-mothers, who, victims to the hysteria of that autumn, existed in terrifying numbers. But I refer to these war-time preoccupations later. Nor do I catalogue the innumerable lectures of this vacation in Birmingham or in the neighbourhood.

On September 13 he returned to Stonyhurst, and found he was to teach classics to the Oxford class and philosophy at the College, where a dwindling number of youths retained the name "philosopher" and attended lectures on that subject. He had already had a little to do with this group in examinations, and could now more officially arouse their interest in life by taking them with him on his study-club expeditions, or even to local hospitals. Somewhat later he moved to the College as their temporary Prefect (February 1915). But I should exaggerate were I to suggest that he put much heart into this part of his work, nor indeed was he kept at it next year.

His expeditions were as many as ever, but have nothing special about them. He was very frequently

indeed at Preston; and almost as often at Blackburn, Burnley, Nelson, Padiham, Darwen. He made of course his Tyneside tour at Christmas; and visited, further afield, Wolverhampton, Leicester, Torquay (at Easter: he gave the usual retreat), Crewe, Stafford, Oakamoor, Sheffield, before the summer came. At all these places he lectured, taking more and more for his themes the problems created by the war, but not yet having fully formed his mind upon them. It was in October 1915 that a visit from Mr. Urquhart, and what was said by him about war and national morality, definitely turned his mind to International Law, a subject destined to preoccupy him much, and to issue into various pamphlets and the like, of which I say a word later on. Else, the *Year-book*, and then the *Primer of Peace and War*, of which, too, I speak in the chapter on War-work, and a number of articles for the press—in particular the more or less local press—were the literary products of these months.

But his main expeditions took him back and back to Birmingham, as for the C.Y.M.S. Conference in October, where he got the ovation which was becoming habitual, the audience rising as he left the Hall and singing him out with musical honours; and in November, when besides C.S.G. work, an Interdenominational Council accepted the title he offered for the business to be discussed at the next year's Summer School at Swanwick, it was: International and Social Relationships in the Light of Christianity.

On St. Ignatius's feast, July 31, 1915, he received news that he was to leave Stonyhurst, and go to Wimbledon to teach classics. "This will be a great break," says the diary simply. In a letter to his sister,

who, about the same time, had been transferred from the superiorship of the Sisters of Charity at Torquay to that at Ancoats, Manchester, he expressed himself rather more freely :

“ So we are both uprooted and told to begin again ! A painful process, but quite good for one, making it quite easy to feel ‘ as humble as a doormat and as plastic as porridge,’ as Tom Burke says. It gives one a curious bruised feeling, as if one had fallen through the world and come out on the other side.”

I need not fear to say that complete sympathy existed between Father Plater and his sister. A letter is prized in which he replied to a very tactful suggestion that he was overworking by the minutest sketch of a little black pot and a little black kettle.

He proceeded to “ tidy up,” as the diary records at intervals. A sobering influence appears to have descended upon him as he notes gravely : “ Walked down to catch train. Caught it.” But in the month that remained to him in the North he put in a great deal more work. He gave retreats at Birmingham, to twenty-two, twenty-four, twenty-six, and twenty men, and again to a number that he does not record. He was foreseeing a special retreat to newspaper boys, “ of whom I know such a number now ; they want looking after.” Each retreat had its special incident or value—one, perhaps, just because it was made up chiefly of old friends ; or because a group of convert clergymen was included ; once, a young actress, who at 13 had decided she would be a Catholic, and was received four years later, did the washing up and recited during recreation ! I may add that her mother followed her into the Church, while her father, ■

Protestant vicar, was under instruction when he died. Or else, little groups of men would pilgrimage from Tyneside or Staffordshire to see him.

He gave another short retreat to working girls and some lectures and then made his own at Stonyhurst itself, ending it on September 8.

On the 13th he went to Wimbledon, arriving "strange, lost; first-day-at-school feeling." He found that he had to teach the top class Rhetoric, and to do a little coaching in the Army Department. This involved some fourteen lectures or classes a week.

London being so close, he spent much time in the C.S.G. offices in Victoria Street, and lectured to the Catholic Federation and at the Hammersmith Training College, and everywhere urged the creation of study-clubs. However, he could not keep away from Birmingham, where he was still seeking a retreat house; he was there for two week-ends in September, giving a retreat to twenty-eight men; for the C.S.G. annual conference in October, when the Town Hall was packed with an enthusiastic audience, and Mr. Cecil Chesterton spoke. He was there once more in October, and in November for the C.Y.M.S. annual general meeting, after which he gave a retreat to twenty-nine working boys. He went, too, to Sheffield—"travelled with an intoxicated soldier who was on his best behaviour and told edifying stories"—lectured, preached, and started "at least two study-clubs." There were other small activities which I omit, as I do what was by far the bulkiest part of his work during this time, that done in the military camps near by. The Tyneside Tour of this year I also speak of in its proper place. Anyhow, his work at Wimbledon

was soon cut short ; for on January 12, 1916, he notes :

“ Letter from the Provincial just after dinner to say that Father General has appointed me Rector of St. George's College and Head of Pope's Hall. General surprise, politely disguised. Much chaff. And so I make up my diary with this amazing news obsessing my imagination. *Deus adjuvet me.*”

He left Wimbledon for Oxford on January 18.

Chapter IX

RECTOR AT OXFORD

January 18, 1916—March 17, 1920

*"Would I could win and keep and feel
That heart of love, that spirit of steel . . .
Flog me, spur me, set me straight
On some vile job I fear and hate,
Some sickening round of long endeavour,
No light, no rest, no respite ever,
All at a pace that must not slack
Though heart would burst and sinew crack ;
Fog in one's eye, the brain a-swim,
A weight like lead in every limb . . .
Do You but keep me, hope or none,
Cheery and staunch till all is done."*

A NEW ZEALANDER ON GALLIPOLI.

WHEN Father Plater returned to Oxford he found that henceforward his work would either lie within that city or be, so to say, expeditionary. But both in and out of Oxford, that work seems so fragmentary, such splinters of activity, such a jumble of odds and ends, that I feel half in despair at the prospect of having to give any coherent account of it. I reflect that to himself it seemed exactly that—a jumble ; he felt himself battling against an innumerable attack of duties ; he could not tell you how the morrow was to be spent, nor even how to-day had gone. But I think one can safely say that his work lay first and foremost within his own community, and therefore I ought to try to give some sort of impression as to how the terms went, and when that is sufficiently done, to mass rapidly together all that concerns his Hall as such, at least until he went to Ireland, which shall be our next landmark. Then I shall try briefly to

indicate the rest of his activities in Oxford itself : these were either war-work, to which I shall give a separate chapter, or else concerned with University or civic enterprises in which he gradually took a considerable share. Then I must make clear how the " expeditionary " part of his life was spent, with the exception of such details as relate directly to the Catholic Social Guild or to the giving of retreats. I fear that this part of the book cannot be made picturesque. But then, neither was Father Plater's life. He denied himself all romance, save in so far as the spiritual life must, of necessity, be romantic.

Father Plater at Oxford held the position of Rector of St. George's College—that is, the group of Jesuit houses situated in Oxford itself (the Presbytery and Pope's Hall as it then was) and at Bristol and Worcester. He went to the last two at proper intervals, and took, naturally, a genuine interest in their welfare ; but they were in older and far more experienced hands than his, and even apart from the amount of autonomy left to the local superiors by the Society's system of government, he had neither the duty nor the wish to interfere with well-managed missions. With the Superior of the Oxford Mission, Father O'Hare, he came to be on terms of true friendship, and I find many notes expressive of the high value he placed upon his advice and how glad he was to have so prudent a consulter close at hand. Naturally, he inaugurated nothing within the parish itself without his co-operation or approval ; but of all this category of his Oxford activity I need say but little.

There was, too, hard by at Summertown, the parish of St. Gregory and St. Augustine, in the charge of Father C. Evans, with whom he was at once on

excellent terms. Each spurred the other's all too active imagination ; and while Father Evans should have halved his energies, he and Father Plater between them concocted ever new schemes, both for the improvement of social conditions in Oxford itself, and for the evangelization of those outlying villages which are the problem of so many parish priests who serve a scattered population. Many experiments were tried ; Catechisms and periodical Masses were instituted in distant villages ; but the labour proved too much for the zealous missionary, and after his serious breakdown rather later on, some of these enterprises had to be dropped.

But there are in Oxford several religious houses ; and the welcome offered by their superiors to the new Rector of Plater's Hall¹ was the beginning of a fraternal co-operation which has not shown any diminution. Father Plater was at once in touch with Dom Anselm Parker, O.S.B., head of the Ampleforth house of studies, now Benet Hall ; he was almost immediately called upon by the late Father W. O'Dowd, head of St. Charles's House for students belonging to the Archdiocese of Birmingham, and by Father Cuthbert, O.S.F.C., Superior of a small Capuchin community, then in St. John's Street, and now in a much larger establishment in Iffley Road. Rather further off, at Cowley, was the school which the Capuchin fathers directed, now in the hands of the Salesians ; and at Begbroke, the very friendly community of the Servite fathers. There are, too, in Oxford two convents, that of the Holy Child, with St. Frideswide's hostel for girl students, and St. Ursula's, a girls' school which housed, as well, other girls who were following university

¹ See Appendix, p. 381.

courses. Further off, in the suburb of Cowley, is Nazareth House; I need not say how dearly Father Plater loved it; and how often he took his visitors to see it, and brought down wounded soldiers or talented cadets to give the children concerts. Nazareth House made a series of tiny "oases" for him, full of refreshment and relaxation.

There was at this time no resident Catholic chaplain for Oxford University. Mgr. A. S. Barnes had been appointed; but so shrunken a University as it then was afforded him no adequate scope, and he was doing important work elsewhere, especially in America.

The poor University had indeed emptied itself into the Army; two or three hundred undergraduates at most, I think, were studying there. But possibly this was all to the good: I tremble to think what steps Father Plater might have taken had his imagination been fired by the sight of the thousands of young men who had, in the old days, thronged the Colleges. As it was, his tasks had grown so colossal by the time when the University had reconstituted itself, that he never really considered doing any work on a large scale among the undergraduates; and anyhow, by then, the chaplain had returned and that field was in other hands.

With the senior members of the University he came to be, however, in close touch. On the whole, he dined out very little; yet he came into contact with practically everyone who was taking an active part in social reform, and he had many old friends: Mr. Urquhart, of course; rather later, Mr. de Zulueta, now Regius Professor of Civil Law; Mr. H. F. Fox, Mr. A. L. Smith, now Master of Balliol, Dr. Marrett, and several others. But I will not

catalogue their names, nor those of the Catholic laity of the parish, among whom he found several most self-sacrificing and trusted collaborators. They do not need my assurance that he was deeply grateful. Yet there is one whom I will commemorate, though not name—a little nun, a lay-sister at one of the convents—gayest of visitors to the sick; incomparable cook; tactfullest healer of domestic troubles; always to the rescue; always competent, cool, and courageous. She saved the situation many a time; men in hospital chaffed and adored her; huge Australians, in retreat, cheated by her most skilfully when they would fain snapshot her, cheered her to the echo as they drove away. God's blessing and St. Joseph's be upon her.

Such was the environment to which Father Plater came in 1916.

He arrived then at Pope's Hall on January 18; "adjusted himself to his environment"; studied several hundredweight of keys, account-books, and the like; was formally installed at Worcester next day, and lectured the same evening to the Oxford men's sodality on "Catholics in Peace and War."

On the 20th his small community returned, and on the next days he paid local visits and already foresaw retreats for soldiers, of whom the town seemed full, and half settled on a house.

On the 24th he was back in London to lecture at Fulham to the Westminster Catholic Federation. It was on this night that an incident occurred which became quite frequent. He met an unknown soldier in Parliament Street, judged he had a "Catholic face," and asked him his "denomination." "R.C." "When do you return to France?" "To-night."

“When were you last at Confession?” “Years ago.” He shrove him in the street.

Then he returned to Oxford, and before his first fortnight there was up had convened a C.S.G. committee in Balliol College, where practically all the local clergy, besides the C.S.G. officials, some undergraduates, several girl-students, and some Oxford residents, including some non-Catholics, were present. It was decided at another meeting next day that he should compose a leaflet on Thrift,¹ edit a cheap edition of the *Peace and War Primer*, and convoke the annual General Meeting of the C.S.G. at Tyneside in October. A study-club, needless to say, was soon arranged.

But on Saturday, February 19, there was a new arrival at the Hall destined to count for much in the history of Father Plater’s rectorship.

“The NEW BULLDOG arrived. A sweet pup—ten weeks old! Quite well-bred. We think we are going to call it Jim.”

“It”! Father Plater soon learnt better than to think of his dog as *it*. Jim, who in moments when severity was called for, became James, grew with astounding rapidity, and by the time he was four weighed four stone. He is an impressive dog, though his shoulders are too high for their width,

¹ This subject, about this time, obsessed him. The effects on domestic arrangements were odd and intermittent. The sheepishness with which Father Plater would own up to a fantastically large gift or “loan” to some vague tradesman or wandering derelict, just after we had been cut off, say, all but one scuttleful of coal per week, or bacon at breakfast, was quite comic. Mr. Vincent Wareing, who arrived at Campion Hall late one night, was escorted to the larder, and remained duly impressed by the meal he made off its singular and fragmentary contents.

and his tail terribly too long—if you catch hold of it, he turns round on himself like a query and tries to bite it off; but no one minded these technical flaws, and his brindled skin is beautiful. He was trained from the first to be the most apostolic of dogs; he ambled sedately beside crippled soldiers (save when, recognizing an old friend, he ran at him, got involved in his crutches, and knocked him over, amid the derisive jeers of his mates—no harm was ever done); he paced beside bath-chairs, and pretended he was pulling them; he became known on lecture platforms; he snored through the gravest meetings; he rode on the box-seat when soldiers drove to retreats, or hung out of the window and barked his welcome when they came to the house. In the frozen moments of one's first encounter with shy men, he lumberingly broke the ice, and it could never re-form; on Christmas Days his advent was hailed with rapture in the hospitals; he ate in every ward and was sick all the way home. He became known as the R.C. bulldog, and recommended the Church to all comers. I am serious when I say that Jimmy did—and does—much good. He is to-day a little more staid, rather more grey; but he still dribbles plaintively at the mere approach of food, and sits beside men in hospital who, from their sheaths of plaster, stretch out affectionate hands to pat his enormous neck. He is a much photographed dog, but exacts a companion. On the only occasion when he consented to be taken alone, his pose of melancholy was such that it had to be accentuated to be tolerable. A handkerchief was tied round his head, and he went forth to the world as "Swinging the Lead." But beneath, an apt quotation more truthfully apostrophizes him as

“Thou whose exterior semblance doth belie thy soul’s immensity !”

Besides a visit to Birmingham, now more accessible, on C.S.G. and retreat business, Father Plater again went to London to a Westminster Catholic Federation meeting on the Catholic Press, and to lead a discussion at the British Institute of Social Service on International Morality, a subject which was to occupy him much.

These excursions, and the local C.S.G. “seminar” on Thrift, and the undergraduates’ study-club, which was very small and did not, I confess, survive, and the first soldiers’ retreat, and a stream of visits, at first thin but steady and soon rapidly increasing, were what occupied him outside the ordinary life of the community during this first term at Oxford.

I cannot pretend that subsequent terms were any less full. Indeed, what I have said in no way suggests the packed character of his days at Oxford, especially when he became better known, and visitors made havoc of the spaces he had hoped to keep clear for work. Nor have I yet alluded to his work with the soldiers, which occupied several hours daily. Quite apart from the minutiae of University business, which became worse as the years passed, his really exasperating charity drove him to do a thousand things which destroyed all chance of leisure or repose, such as personally escorting round Oxford visitors who never would have dreamt of expecting, still less of suggesting, his companionship. The sheer nerve strain of continually saying the same things—yes ! of making the same jokes about historical monuments—leads one to sympathize with the race itself of vergers, who have it for a job. Yet it *is* their job, and they do not labour to be alive in their chatter,

and they take refuge in dates—Father Plater never knew any dates—and in ready-made phrases ; while Father Plater tried to put his full conviction and vivacity into all that he said, even when he repeated himself. And I should like to add that in this he was genuine. Let me not have shattered the happy memories of anyone, nor have led them to suppose that the kindness they recall on Father Plater's part was a pretence. He might return to groan and moan over the wreck of his day ; but he had real, separate, good-will for each of the persons he took round ; he really wanted to give them a happy time, and assuredly he gave it. I suppose, after all, that the almost awestruck affection he inspired, even in chance and passing guests, justified his behaviour. None the less, the verb *To Cope* assumed a substantial place in our vocabulary. "Look at all the things I have to cope with," was a regular formula after breakfast. And I would find little notes upon my table. "X has arrived—can you COPE ?" "Y has happened. COPE, please !"

It could be asked, and indeed not infrequently was asked, whether so much outside work did not interfere with Father Plater's main duties, which lay, after all, within his own Hall.

I will say, first, that I do not know of any instance in Father Plater's life when he was not in close and obedient relation with his superiors or consciously fell short of the respect due to their wishes—except in so far as it was constitutionally impossible for him not to overwork. Then it will be remembered that much of the work to which I have alluded was in Oxford : term-time expeditions were relatively rare, short, and regretted. Nor can it even be suggested that he was lacking in the care he gave

to what concerned the University careers of his men. On the contrary, he was inventive, and foresaw all sorts of new possibilities for them in the strictly scholastic field. And for their more general welfare he was most careful and anxious. He knew how much depended on exercise, and on games that should really relax the mental strain inevitable in a house like the Hall. Indeed, he often went on the river with them ; and on Thursdays, in the summer, when the men had a half-day off, he frequently organized small picnics, and himself rowed out with them, or punted, or swam. Individuals will recall with what delicate sympathy he tried to encourage them in hours of depression, or to associate them with his own work if the studies were becoming too much of an *idée fixe*, or generating panics, or for any other reason required an admixture of other mental elements. One of his scholastics has written to me that Father Plater's greeting, when you arrived at Oxford, was "so personal that you felt at once that you had been admitted into a family. His room was the natural haunt of his subjects. He had to be protected against his own unselfishness."

To show the kind of impression he made on members of his community, as they grew to know him more intimately, I quote the following from a letter sent to me by one of them :

"For many months it was my privilege to accompany him each morning to the hospital to serve his Mass. Often he carried the Blessed Sacrament with him, and his recollected manner as he walked along with his head down on his breast would bring home to me again the feeling that for him this alone was reality and that outside this nothing counted. At such times I felt I did not really know him, and that his real life was quite hidden.

“ He once sat on my bed and we chatted together a long time in the dark. I have many memories of similar little intimacies which helped to endear him to me. And yet despite them all I never felt that I had received a full revelation of himself. He never surrendered himself to anyone, but there was always a deep reserve, the part of his soul which he kept strictly for God. The remarkable thing was that he could hold so firmly to this while giving so much of himself away. This puzzled people. After feeling themselves invited to friendship with him, they were suddenly faced with the doubt whether he cared for them at all. Was not what they had thought to be an affection peculiar to themselves something they shared with every new soul with which he came in contact ? I have even been assured that Father Charles had no real affection, but poured himself out in a general benevolence that had nothing to do with the individual but was a tribute to the spiritual possibilities of that soul or to the intrinsic loveliness of human nature as such.

“ It was the love of Our Lord that evoked and yet limited his love for others.

“ With soldiers I noticed that he never descended, as they say, to their level. I shall not be misunderstood : I do not mean that a soldier's level is low ; but there is a rough sort of chaff which some people think necessary if you are to get on with rough men ; it is not necessary, but is unnatural ; they see through it and resent it as an impertinence ; but he used their faith as a lever to lift them up to any level you might wish. That a man was a Catholic seemed to make him take all sorts of things for granted. It annihilated any fear of ‘ professional attendance.’ It swept away all embarrassment or shyness, and made the freest relations remain priestly, and the gravest, most priestly intercourse remain personal and affectionate.”

He tried, then, to associate his community, in many ways, with his wider apostolic work, such as catechisms, or in the hospitals, or in expeditions,

on which he took the wounded, too. These were happy, because he was not just *calculated* in all this, but happy himself, as the following little paragraph from his diary well shows :

“ July 4. A glorious and enjoyable day. Took five Americans—two wounded and three flying-men—by boat to Iffley. Tea at the M.s [an American Catholic family] in American style. Miss [Louise Imogen] Guiney came in (cheers !). With us, also, was a dear Australian, W. Miss G. took us over Iffley Church, and for a walk. Back to more tea. Then home, dropping the wounded at Christ Church meadows corner. The three flying men walked back to the Hall with me, arriving 8.30, and had a meal. We toasted the 4th of July. McG., a dear lad from Philadelphia, was shriven in the chapel. The rest non-Catholics, but such dear boys. W. christened me ‘ Dad ’ at an early stage and we had a great talk. He must end up a Catholic, D.V. . . . The Macdonalds’ roses, Iffley Church, the talk of the boys, the home-feeling and joy of it all to them—all this I must remember. So will they. *Deo Gratias.* ”

It is scarcely my business to dwell on his care of religious discipline. He would have been heart-broken if that had, at any point, grown lax ; and it was largely that he might himself give good example in the matter of, early rising that he persisted in getting up at the usual time, when he was in no condition for supporting the long fast before breakfast, and only admitted advice that he should sleep late with the greatest reluctance. And here I will say no more than this : the sight of the Rector’s own prayer should have sufficed to inspire and to preserve the highest spiritual ambitions. No one could have made so vulgar a mistake as to think that he was a man absorbed in external things or forgetful of the only source of true vitality.

But it remains, that while he left nothing undone that concerned the house and its occupants, he did so much more than that, that he was constantly exhausted; and the sight of exhaustion is itself, I think, exhausting. Conversation, especially at lunch, was often difficult. The men learned to recognize when the Rector was tired out, and showed tactful sympathy. But it is not good to have, for Superior, a man half stunned with fatigue, whom you may actually hesitate, out of mercy, to approach. Therefore, as I shall say below, it became more and more desirable to impress upon him that during term, at any rate, he should not travel; and to this he agreed, and intended, at least, to observe the agreement.

During this first half-year at Oxford—that is, from January 1916 to the close of the University year in June—nothing of local importance happened (apart always from work among soldiers and interdenominational interests, of which I speak separately), save the scheme to hire the Octagon, a building reputed to be the oldest house in Oxford and belonging to Hertford College. This was in fact done rather later on, and a reference library and a reading-room were established in it. The first floor became a lecture-room, and philosophical or apologetic or sociological lectures were regularly given there. Here too the library was housed and grew, books being given or lent to it with remarkable generosity. Above were the C.S.G. offices, and it was hoped to make there some sort of rest room, for girl students. However, after a couple of years or so, Hertford College needed the Octagon to relieve its own congestion and made these rooms into additional quarters for undergraduates. The C.S.G. and the

library then moved to one block of Bishop King's Palace in St. Aldate's, where the Catholic chaplain at present resides ; the large room under the chapel has become the reference library and the meeting-place of the Newman Society, and there, too, lectures are still given, though the less central position makes them harder to manage. The "Octagon Board," consisting of the four Heads of Houses, Father Cuthbert, O.S.F.C., Dom A. Parker, O.S.B., Father O'Dowd, and Father Plater, met regularly to discuss the term's programme of lectures. Later on the Board was re-formed, when Mgr. Barnes returned to Oxford.

Other local details are few. One dream, which came to little, if not exactly nothing, was a Catholic allotment at Oxford. This was due to Father Plater's having a very bad cold during the retreat he made at Manresa in December. It refused to yield till he took to digging in the garden, and hence his inspiration came. A piece of ground was actually acquired, on what terms I do not now remember. Some of the Community were sent to work it ; but unless I err it had served, for some generations, as the dumping-ground for the broken crockery of at least one college, and could not be said to hold promise of much fertility, though it pandered to Father Plater's taste for archæological excavation.¹

The summer vacation opened with a Swanwick

¹ About this time he met with a rebuff to which life so far had not accustomed him. He went to say Mass at a convent—I will not say where—and notes pathetically : "Inquisitorial portress : wanted to know if I had come to say Mass. Did she suppose I had come to clean the boots ? Had I been there before, and what was my name ? That's the sort of portress that got St. Peter in to trouble."

week, and apart from the visits to the North mentioned elsewhere, had for its next landmark a big retreat to thirty-eight men at Oscott, and after this came the episode of Lydd. Other retreats were to twenty-six members of the clergy at Ampleforth, and to thirty-six and again to twenty-five at Birmingham. The C.T.S. Conference at Manchester was the only other outstanding event of the vacation. And apart from the C.S.G. conference in October, little of importance happened during the Michaelmas term. He made his retreat at Manresa and went on directly after Christmas to Tyneside. During the first term of 1917 he developed the Oxford branch of the C.S.G., and devised with the help of the local clergy the scheme mentioned above for the evangelization of the neighbouring villages, where there were many Catholics out of reach of Mass. After a vacation spent chiefly in the North, he returned to occupy the summer term in the ordinary ways, though by now interdenominational work is bulking larger on his programme. The summer retreats began at Oxford, and continued at Birmingham, where all went as usual; but a retreat to the clergy, eighty-four in number, at Womersley tired him much, and I remember that he went to it in a panic because he thought he had not prepared as he should. That was in a sense true: from this time on he was not giving himself the chance of really preparing anything, and I think the quality of his work suffered, though not as much as he thought it did. He came back from this and the preceding clergy retreat professing himself thoroughly humiliated. He felt more than ever that it was the secular clergy who bore the long, monotonous burden of the Apostle's day.

I might have placed under "war-work" the little I have to say about the pamphlets issued by the C.S.G. on the occasion of the Peace Note issued by Pope Benedict XV. However, the scheme within which this piece of work embedded itself overshot directly war-time interests a good deal, and though it did not reach the development intended for it, had better be mentioned here. Before the present perspective had formed itself, which enables the world to acknowledge that Benedict was the foremost statesman in Europe—almost the only one, you may say, who was clear-sighted without being cynical—that Note aroused violent criticism, and it was felt imperative that a Catholic commentary of some sort should forthwith reach the public at least of the C.S.G. In the August, then, of 1917 I wrote at Father Plater's request some very brief paragraphs which were appended to the text of the Peace Note; the results were astonishing; within ten days of publication, ten thousand were sold; within four weeks forty thousand; and altogether sixty thousand copies were disposed of. This was largely due to the terrific toil Father Plater devoted to the distribution of the pamphlets, though the desire to read something of the sort was so keen that in some towns they were even being sold in cinemas. The pamphlet was followed by another dealing with the replies to the Peace Note, the writing of which was much facilitated by relevant extracts from German, Austrian, and Turkish newspapers being put at my disposal. But the sale of this was not so good. Father Plater was, however, encouraged in an idea inspired by very high authority to bring out a series of C.S.G. pamphlets dealing with International Law, and this saddled him with yet another committee, consisting

of Mrs. Crawford, Miss G. Robinson, Miss Urquhart, Mr. F. F. Urquhart, Mr. Sidney Parry, and myself. My feeling about this enterprise, as about much else that Father Plater was attempting at this time, was that it tried to do too much too quickly. Far more expert knowledge, too, was needed. It was impossible that the small group to which he applied, scarcely one of whom had really made a profound study of International Law, should have been able to write even popularly upon such difficult subjects. In fact, I ought not to have said "even popularly," for popular writing really demands quite as much knowledge of detail as erudite work does, which sets out all the documents explicitly. A good popular work ought to make you clear that the author omits, not because he does not know, but because he knows so well what is important that he can safely leave out the rest. All the same, the attempt, which materialized in some five pamphlets, was valuable if only as the hint of what required to be done later on; and also because it reintroduced to the public the forgotten work of that very remarkable man, David Urquhart, whose *Life* has, in fact, been written since by Miss G. Robinson.

A retreat made at St. Beuno's half-way through September refreshed Father Plater for the time being; he climbed the familiar hills, and found that never had he "enjoyed nature so supernaturally."

In the chapter on Interdenominational work, the Mansion House meetings to which he now began to go will be alluded to. It was after one of these, on October 18, that he writes:

"A NOTION. Organize Catholic School of Economics at

Oxford—get each Order to send a man, also post-grads—and soldier-scholars.”

This, then, is the second birth, so to say, of the idea of a Labour College, for he had certainly thought of it before. Possibly the idea had become latent for some time, or else this school of economics was to be something quite different, which he had no time to elaborate. Nothing else at Oxford occurred to diversify the ordinary work of this year.

Lent of 1918 was marked for Father Plater by a great joy, in the shape of the publication of Cardinal Bourne's pastoral, which was circulated throughout the country by the title of *The Nation's Crisis*. Father Plater found in it the sanction of many of his own most substantial and organic ideas, and a great part of his work, when he went about the country during the rest of this year, was the making of it known by sermon and by lecture, and he exulted in its astonishing sales and the interest it aroused.

As regards the Hall itself, all that I need say over and above this is that after long negotiations, which the courtesy of the University officials facilitated all the way through, a decree was unanimously carried in Convocation on May 14, 1918, making Plater's Hall into Champion Hall—that is, a permanent private Hall, independent of the demise of its Master. That Master was to be nominated by the Governing Body of the Hall, subject to approval by Convocation. The passing of the decree took place at the motion of the Rev. E. M. Walker of Queen's College, supported by the late Mr. Sidney Ball and other Fellows of St. John's College, and was cordially approved by the Vice-Chancellor, Dr. Blakiston, President of

Trinity College. At the same time the Benedictine Hall was put on the same footing, and became Benet's Hall. Campion Hall felt itself very kindly treated by St. John's College, which actually welcomed its adoption of a name which might have seemed likely to arouse some dislike. For, after all, Edmund Campion had been a member of that College, and though he was the most distinguished scholar of his day, and the very idol of the University, and afterwards Proctor, yet he was certainly executed for what was then judged to be high treason. Far, however, from adopting any such attitude, St. John's accepted later on a small portrait of Campion, inscribed: *Edmundi Campiani Aula Collegio*—Campion's Hall to Campion's College. It now hangs in St. John's Senior Common Room. On March 7, 1919, the Master was further allowed to put others than members of the Society of Jesus upon the books of the Hall.

Need I say that the Hall not unfrequently welcomed, too, groups of both clergy and laity for committee meetings of various kinds, notably of the C.S.G., of educational authorities—in particular, in 1919 and 1920, the members of the Catholic Conference of Higher Studies—or of local workers in social betterment; it offered, too, its due meed of hospitality, especially to chaplains and others from the Colonies, and to quite a number of foreign delegates from various societies, many of whom came from neutral countries, notably Switzerland, Holland, and Spain; they were studying conditions of life in England and forming their opinion about our war-mentality; but the visits had a much more lasting value than that, and have proved more useful since in assisting, for example, good relations between

Oxford and foreign universities. We were privileged too to receive the visits of distinguished writers, like Mr. Clutton Brock, who became a frequent guest at the Hall; Mr. F. C. Conybeare; M. René Bazin, and others whom I will not set down; since then I have had many opportunities of observing how deeply Father Plater's personality had impressed them, and that is why I allude to their passage.

When Campion Hall was an accomplished fact, Father Plater felt that in some way his rectorship at Oxford had done its particular and substantial work, and that the House, at any rate, had its future secure. It can be said without offence, I hope, that this happy event was at least much facilitated by the very high opinion that had by now been formed of Father Plater in the University. His charm counted for something, but for even more did his transparent honesty and his amazingly hard work, and his patent readiness to be of service where he could, without other idea than to *be* of service. It was not likely that the University authorities would entertain vulgar fancies like those of the propaganda press, which spoke of a Jesuit "push" in Oxford, or would themselves misconceive the motives of the Society in seeking the best education available for its sons. Indeed, I have often heard it commented on with genuine surprise and gratification that the Society should trust University training so completely as it does, and Oxford might justly, I think, see herein a tribute to its impartiality and honesty of purpose. But it could quite well be understood that Oxford might not wish to see the multiplication of "denominational" groups within its embrace, that seeks to welcome all alike and without distinction of political or religious creed, as without

care for caste ; and a House that should contain not only Catholics alone, but clerics and indeed Jesuit students alone, might seem an undesirable anomaly. However, the University was as wide-minded as it was kindly, and its brain was haunted by no hallucination of any popish plot.

In Oxford itself his special work as Rector held in fact no new developments ; at the end of May in the next year, I find that Dr. Counsell, whose generous devotion to the Hall has been unlimited, ordered him a month's rest ; and even during term he spent much time lying on a deck chair in the garden. After the June visit to Swanwick¹ he underwent, I think for the only time in his life, a technical rest-cure, and spent a fortnight at the Jesuit convalescent house at Petworth in Sussex. But apart from the fact that this was much too short, that was not the sort of rest that he needed, and he neither expected to gain, nor in fact gained, much benefit from it. Besides, no sooner was it over than he flew off again to Preston and then went to open the new retreat house at Birmingham—"Penryn," in Somerset Road, Edgbaston—and gave three retreats in quick succession. He came back to Oxford, where the C.S.G. Conference was to be held in October, and on September 6 he writes the only complaint that I can recall in his diary :

"Horribly busy days. All the work of the Conference seems to be upon my shoulders."

The Conference occurred as had been arranged, and I allude to it in the chapter on the C.S.G.

From the Tyneside tour of that year he returned so exhausted that I gave up hope of his recovery.

¹ See p. 191, *sqq.*

None the less he spoke almost at once to eight hundred undergraduates on "Christianity and Reconstruction" for the "Religion and Life Week" which Oxford was observing: the Bishop of Oxford, Dr. Gore, was in the Chair, and Mr. Tawney was the other speaker. He notes that he "didn't feel happy. Hadn't prepared it." The term ached its way out. On February 17 he had a heart attack from 11 p.m. to 3 a.m., and it was arranged that he should go to Ireland for a spell of complete rest on the islands off the west coast. Thither he in fact started on March 17, 1920.

Chapter X

INTERDENOMINATIONAL WORK

"Never look coldly on an olive branch or a mere leaf thereof. How much it costs a strong mind to make the effort to hold it out! I have just read in Hodson's 'Twelve Years of a Soldier's Life' how an officer who had been his enemy came up to ask him to shake hands when they were together in camp, not in actual battle, saying that in such times of danger he could not bear to stand apart from one who was doing so much for the country. Death is encamped over against us whether we be at Delhi or not."—CORY.

THE Catholic who is fain to work for his country's weal is often faced by the singular paradox that it is easier for him to co-operate with men and women of no creed than with his fellow-Christians. The reason is that Christian work is as a rule interwoven with some organization of an ecclesiastical sort with which the Catholic cannot be in vital connexion. He would find it impossible to join completely in the work done by the organization without appearing, at least, to commit himself to the organization itself. Neither can he join in the public, still less in the official, worship of a non-Catholic group without seeming to identify himself with the religious tenets of the group.

But no one fails to see the frightful loss of numbers, of resources, of time, of power, of example, and of downright charity, that results from the sad separation. It is of the highest importance in every way that, provided misunderstanding be but avoided, co-operation should take place. Father Plater longed, out of sheer general good-will, scarcely less than through Christian charity, to work in with good wherever it was to be found. Social work gave him a neutral platform, so to say, though I

would rather find some less negative word than "neutral." It is a grey word, and Father Plater's will to work was always passionate.

But the practical problem recurred : for not only was it the laudable habit of those with whom he wished to collaborate, and on whose experience and enthusiasm he wished to draw, to inspire themselves by Christian ideals, but they came to see more and more that special reforms could only be conceived and constructed on a Christian basis. But Catholics and Quakers, for example, may differ very widely as to what Christianity is.

In this chapter I wish no more than to show how Father Plater addressed himself to this problem in the concrete, and how with full approbation from his ecclesiastical superiors he went far to solve the problem in his own person without for a minute compromising Catholic loyalty, nor yet injuring charity, but rather increasing it and cementing the ties it formed.

The background of Father Plater's own work is as follows :

A committee called the Interdenominational Conference of Social Service Unions arranged, in 1912, a Summer School which was in fact held at Swanwick in Derbyshire in the June of that year. Ten denominational guilds or other groups sent representatives, and among these was the Catholic Social Guild. I cannot find a complete list of those of its members who were present ; but a paper was read by Miss E. Fortey, and about a score of Catholics attended. The general topic under discussion was "The Life of the Industrial Worker," and a full reprint of the lectures is to be found in a little book called

Converging Views of Social Reform, published in 1913 by Messrs. J. M. Dent. In it the subject for the next year's discussions was announced: "The Minimum Wage."

It was not, however, till 1914, when Father Plater went to Swanwick himself, that he was invited to be the Catholic speaker for the Sunday afternoon.

On June 20 of that year he arrived at Swanwick to find that the rest of the Catholic contingent consisted of Mgr. Parkinson, Mrs. Martin Edmunds, Mrs. Crawford, Miss Fortey, Miss Vaughan Smith, Messrs. Toke, Somerville, H. McKay, himself, and perhaps one or two others whose names I cannot find. The evening was spent in making and renewing acquaintances.

The first united meeting was at 3 p.m. the next day, Sunday, and the three speakers were Bishop Gore, Father Plater, and Dr. Garvie. The Bishop, who spoke first, was, Father Plater found, saddened most deeply by the topic of disunion with which he had to deal.

"Very moving and poignant—note of pain and reproach throughout—wasted opportunities. Spoke with anguish of hindrances to Unity which could not be removed. An unforgettable address."

Father Plater's speech followed and he took deliberately "a cheerful note." On reading the report of it, from which there is indeed nothing special, I think, to quote, I find that the cheerfulness was of a very grave sort, and consisted chiefly in contrasting that Peace of God, which could subsist with and in war, with the peace, according to the world's standards, from which Europe then seemed as far as ever. It was a very spiritual address, and threw

the hearers back on to optimism indeed, but a wholly supernatural one, and it was altogether to the Holy Spirit that he looked to "anooint and cheer" faces that too many tears had stained.

Dr. Garvie's address followed, and was, Father Plater said, "fine : strong and rugged, humorous—broad Scotch."

On this first visit he spent perhaps most of his time in getting familiar with the field of action and its occupants; but he did that very quickly, and he had a great ally in Bishop Gore, who caused him to be specially invited to the executive committee which was occupied in discussing the future of the School. He attended again next day, and by then, Mr. Will Reason, now organizing secretary of the Christian Social Crusade, tells me, had won the affection of all.

On the Monday he raced home to Stonyhurst, examined and lectured on the next four days, and raced back to Swanwick on the Saturday. By special request he gave a "confabulation" to about forty people on retreats, and returned home on the 29th.

On November 9 I find him at Birmingham attending an interdenominational committee meeting with Bishop Gore in the chair, and he suggests "International and Social Relationships in the Light of Christianity" as the title of next year's Summer School discussion, and the suggestion is accepted. To Swanwick he, in fact, went on June 26, 1915, and made one of a Catholic group of seven. It was here that he first met Mr. Clutton Brock, who was to be so good a friend from this time onwards. Here, again, he gave one of the three inaugural addresses, though of this I find no trace. Catholics came drifting in during the week, which became more and more genial but never less than strenuous. Nor

was its activity mental only. Sports were organized and philosophers tried to walk on flower-pots and bishops fought for buns on strings.

Father Plater wrote, at Mr. Clutton Brock's perhaps unneeded suggestion, a Swanwick Alphabet in rhyme, also a long idyll in Tennysonian style concerning local personalities and incidents, which will hardly bear quotation, for the moment has gone and the atmosphere of the place evaporated. But I can safely say that these wise follies eased considerably the strain of a week that might have been no light one, and saved the situation from all its conatural perils of unreality. Such conferences are rightly serious; but once it is felt to be a duty to be serious, you are apt to shrivel into the conventionally earnest.

Father Plater was chosen to give the closing address, which should synopsise as it were the ideas circulated in the conference. I quote fragments of it, that my readers may find it easier to realize the scope of the Swanwick School.

"My instructions are that I should gather up the thoughts of the School during the week and give them out again in a spiritual setting.

"Serious as the divergences between us may be, they do not materially affect our purpose in this Summer School. We set ourselves this week to do a definite work, and we have done it. It is not, of course, a completed work. It is only a beginning. But it is a good beginning. . . .

"We have gained in the first place a better and more sympathetic understanding of each other.

"Let me here insist on the enormous value of the sympathy which has grown up amongst us and which has often been referred to as the 'Swanwick spirit.' It is not a mere matter of sentiment but a genuine fellowship or

friendship, based on a deepening mutual understanding and respect. This, besides being a precious possession to the individual, is a beneficent social force of almost incalculable promise.

"The second result which we have secured by the conference is a deeper realization of our common aim and a more intense enthusiasm in our resolve to prosecute it.

"That common aim—a very practical and important and noble aim—is to help to secure in Europe and in the world a positive and permanent peace. We all, without exception, realize war to be a hateful and horrible thing, and we further realize that its abolition can only be affected by Christianity.

"We are all agreed, too—and this is the point to which I invite your special attention—that the main condition of a positive and permanent peace is the admission and the observance of *international morality*, of the laws of justice and charity as binding nations as well as individuals. Now please observe that our common recognition of the paramount claims of international morality is not compromised by our religious differences, however fundamental these may be—and I hold them to be far more fundamental than is commonly recognized. All who call themselves Christians must admit that the laws of morality do extend to nations as well as to individuals. Indeed, this great truth is not a specifically Christian truth at all. It was recognized before the advent of Christ and may be recognized to-day by any who will take the trouble to think. . . .

"Reason tells men what to do, Christianity enables them to do it. . . .

"The very thoroughness of our agreement on this basic principle may blind us, here at Swanwick, to the fact that what is a platitude to us may be a startling revelation to other people; and our eager preoccupation with the machinery of peace may cause us to overlook the great work of moral propaganda which lies immediately before us. . . .

"You will remember the firm and reassuring note struck

by Mr. Clutton Brock in the opening paper. He told us of the power of Christian thought resolutely applied. The biological theory of life, like all substitutes for Christianity, had broken down utterly and patently.

"Mr. Brock told us that Christianity had proved itself right by commanding 'impossibilities.'

"That which most concerns us here is the one referred to by Mr. Brock of not hating our enemies.

"The love of enemies, then, may seem difficult enough. But Christianity, which imperatively commands it, shows us how to accomplish it. And as the Bishop of Oxford has told you, it can be done and can only be done by thinking of others as sons of God.

"The Bishop enumerated four great opportunities of Christianity at the present moment :

"1. The first is the showing of the spirit of sacrifice. That has been displayed by our men who have joined the Army, though not by them alone. The Bishop went on to plead (and here lies our opportunity) that this spirit of sacrifice in our people should somehow be maintained for the higher purposes of human life after the war.

"2. The second opportunity lies in the recent intensifying of the notion of service to the State. We have suddenly reacted from an individualism run mad. There is, of course, the peril of an opposite extreme, and it is for Christianity to show us how to strike the balance.

"3. Thirdly, we were reminded of the opportunity for asserting the supremacy of the spiritual over the temporal. Religion must not be harnessed to the chariot wheels of government ; but it is this because it is master and not servant.

"4. Fourthly, the Bishop laid stress on the supranational character of Christianity.

"Dr. Wicksteed, you will remember, eloquently drove home these last two points by showing how a nation, lying in absolute political helplessness and unable to organize its own life, might still send forth a light which should shine down the centuries. He also warned us (as did the

Bishop of Oxford and several other speakers) of the growing spirit of impatience and of all moral restraint which is unhappily showing itself in our own press and on our own platforms. We must win at any cost, it is said. No, we must answer firmly, not at *any* cost. Not at the cost of moral wrongdoing. Better for the Empire to perish. That is the truest patriotism. And among our subjects for study during the coming autumn place might be found for the morality of reprisals.

“Mr. Zimmermann’s stimulating paper on true and false nationalism considered nationalism from a spiritual and educational standpoint rather than from that of politics. This has an important bearing not only upon the success of missionary effort but upon international peace.

“As for the two papers read on the subject of Christianity and War, the one contending that Christianity permitted war and the other that Christianity condemned all war, not even a magician could make them ‘meet in a higher unity.’ One of them must be wrong. Which it is I leave you to determine. The point to notice is that we are all united in our main purpose of securing a stable peace by Christian action.

“The important part played by education in securing international peace was stressed by Mr. Temple, Mr. Heath, Mr. A. L. Smith, Mr. Shann, and many other speakers. Mr. Temple spoke of the need of an educated and disciplined democracy, and pointed out that our ideal should be . . . an educational highway along which a whole class might progress. The latter is the ideal of the Workers’ Educational Association, of which his glowing account was corroborated by Mr. A. L. Smith, and it avoids the danger, convincingly urged by Mr. Zimmermann, of producing a type of citizen without roots. In connexion with the W.E.A. it was encouraging to learn (what many of us knew already from experience) that a boy who leaves school at 13 can pick up his studies again at a University level at the age of 21. Minds do develop in the interval, and the faculty of study is not lost. Some speakers thought that,

valuable as was the work of tutorial classes, it only affected a very few. Mrs. Crawford brought out the very important point that an educated *élite* of working-men will speedily affect the whole working-class community. At the conferences on practical work these points were developed, and resolutions were carried in favour of promoting the study of international relations, especially among the working-classes, during the coming autumn, and of facilitating the attendance of working-men at our Summer School.

“In conclusion, I may remind you how often and how wisely in this conference stress has been laid upon the need of prayer. Some of us are not able to join your corporate prayer, though we would gladly welcome your joining in ours; but do not suppose for a moment that we either omit to pray for you or regard your prayers as valueless. On the contrary, we strive to repay the debt of your unfailing kindness and sympathy by earnest prayer for your welfare; and we beg your prayers for our own. It is sometimes said that we are all serving God in our own way: let us rather pray that we may serve Him in His. Here, once more, we have a common aim. We all love Christ Our Lord and seek to follow Him and to do His will.”

The next substantial piece of work was done in the February of 1916, when the question of a minimum programme of social reform that could be accepted by all the Social Service Unions was mooted. In May the matter began to take shape, and at a meeting of the conference at Dr. Carlyle's at Oxford, Father Plater was asked to draw it up. “Here's a job to keep me going!” he half ruefully exclaims; but he set to work with a will, and on June 26 he went to Swanwick with a completed draft to show round to his friends and to obtain their views upon.¹ The

¹ There were this time seventeen Catholics at the Summer School, but nothing of outstanding importance took place.

programme was unofficially approved by all who saw it. The Summer School committee had indeed sent in memoranda which had been noted and incorporated in due measure into the document which was now displayed.

The manifesto was finally approved in February 1917, but though at a committee meeting at Cuddesdon in October of the previous year it had been decided to make it the subject of the discussions at the next Summer School, this fell through because of the increasing difficulties due to the war. In June, however, it was decided not to omit, on this account, strenuous efforts to ensure the wide diffusion of the manifesto, and Dr. Carlyle and Father Plater were specially deputed to interview members of the Society of Friends in order to ensure their co-operation. Alas! this is one of the few occasions that I have to register on which Father Plater received a real rebuff. The meeting with this particular committee of the Friends was as unfriendly as well might be; Father Plater found himself in the midst of persons he considered extremists and too difficult to negotiate with, and fled before the conference was over to Oscott, where he found "a very different atmosphere." I must add that the ill-feeling was not directed to the personality of Father Plater; it has since then ceased to exist.

Father Plater was back at Swanwick when its meetings were resumed in 1919, but there is nothing special to record about the visit, except a certain message, written by "Jimmy," to his friends at Swanwick. I want to quote it nearly all; and I want that in it should be detected—underneath the humour and the fun—some real spiritual advice

which Father Plater felt was *needed at Swanwick*. Its details I leave to the discerning.

“ I’m Jim the bulldog. Candid friends remark
They wouldn’t care to meet me in the dark.
My face perhaps is ugly. I don’t mind it,
I have the happiness to be behind it.

“ Swanwick’s top-hole. I wangle lots of food,
And even dear Aunt Lucy says I’m good.
She puts the wind up some : she spares the rod,
Yet even Bishops tremble at her nod.

“ There’s only one thing that I cannot bear,
And that’s the interval for silent prayer.
I hold my breath ! My master said I must ;
But I confess, I very nearly bust.

“ I’m very mild and faithful unto death,
‘ A simple dog that lightly draws its breath ’ :
But when a lecturer begins to bore,
I do what others do : I gently snore.

“ I’m of all creeds : when starved, a Protestant,
A Methodist in getting what I want,
A Quaker when my master shows the stick,
When I’m at large—a Roaming Catholic.

“ I’m fond of books, I pull them all to bits,
And throw their outraged owners into fits,
Yet these same owners hardly think it matters
To tear each other’s characters to tatters.

“ Children I love : and if you are as these,
I love you too, and do my best to please.
If you are not : well, let me put it thus—
As Christians you have simply missed the bus.

“ St. Francis loved all fishes, beasts, and birds ;
With reverence they listened to his words ;
And if at Swanwick I encountered him
I fancy he would call me Brother Jim.

“ The stars and hills praise God, I hear you say.
I don't pretend to be as great as they ;
Yet, a poor comrade in this tearful vale,
Is it for nothing that I wag my tail ? ”

The document, however, henceforward called or at least widely known as *Christian Social Reconstruction*, was now put forward by a special committee of the Interdenominational Conference.

In March 1918 a fuller development of this statement was discussed, and it was mentioned that Father Plater had written what practically amounted to that, for the C.S.G. This was, in fact, what I allude to below, the 1918 Year-book, called *A Christian Social Crusade*. He, Dr. Carlyle, and Mr. Malcolm Spencer were appointed to see what alterations would be necessary if it were to be circulated for general use ; but the difficulty of adapting a frankly Catholic work, together with financial considerations, proved insurmountable despite unfaltering goodwill on all sides. So the Year-book was saved for a different destiny, and the Conference produced a book of its own, *Christianity and Social Renewal*, by Mr. Will Reason, in which the text of the original statement may now be read. But since all its substance is incorporated in the Year-book above mentioned, I see no purpose to be served by reprinting it in this volume.

Such, then, was the way in which Father Plater got definitely into contact with those from whom so much separated him. I am careful not to suggest,

it is clear, that he inaugurated anything of which I have so far spoken ; but he added to it much of his own spiritual force, and his friends at Swanwick were glad to acknowledge this. He on his side derived much edification and inspiration, and always returned from his expeditions the better for them in every way. If I am to be quite frank, I will say that he thought he really could contribute not only kindness but a little of that drying sense of humour which makes "vapouring" impossible or less likely. He was always afraid of moist sentiment, and of phrases merely. He thought they fostered illusions that something had been done, when the doing still remained to be started. He thought that a little most gentle chaff helped much towards this. He regarded his rôle as a somewhat earthly one at the outset—at least as a most unmystically common-sense one. On this basis of common sense, he felt you could build all the supernatural edifices you might wish. And with the supernatural he always wished to end. The impression he made may be gathered from what Miss Gardner has kindly written to me :

"He, truly, was ready for service anywhere. Those of us whom he helped so wonderfully for these last years will, I hope, learn through his memory to be more ready. The loss that the Christian Social Service Movement has sustained is very great, and of this no one can speak so certainly as the one whose burdens he has shared and lightened by his devotion—his strength—his clarity of thought and steadfastness of purpose—his charm—his love—his wit. . . . Through him many of us have grown to love and understand some of the mysteries of the Christian Faith."

I would add only this. Father Plater often grieved that he had so little time for direct instruc-

tion in the Catholic Faith. I do not think he received many converts into the Church. Still less could he occupy himself with the technical problems of what is called "Reunion." I think he was convinced that massive reunion of this group or that with the Catholic Church was not likely to be effected. Certainly no compromise in matters of doctrine was even worth thinking about. But that does not mean he did not reflect upon the terrible scandal created by a divided Christendom. He was sure, at any rate, that reunion was not to be discussed even among people who differed as to first principles, or who were vague about them. He was therefore eager to create that unity underlying faith and hope and charity which would come from agreement as to first principles such as emerged from these conferences. Once it was clear that God was the basis of all life, and that without God's laws no life was really livable, the divided units had at least begun to set towards the centre and therefore towards one another. No amount of pushing them about the circumference could ensure that. So he thought that the true reunion was by no means unassisted by conferences such as I have described. And his non-Catholic collaborators have assured me of this paradox: that whereas it was the Catholic contingent, of course, that insisted uncompromisingly upon *separation in worship*, yet it was felt by all that Father Plater, beyond all others, diffused the really *unifying spirit*. "You cannot exaggerate this," I have been told. Such is the power of deep faith in God, and of love for the souls He made.

On arriving at Oxford he found, as I have said, men who were already his firm friends, and he soon

made others. Before a couple of months were over, he is to be found attending a lecture on "Democracy and War," by the Master of Balliol, in the Co-operative rooms in Walton Street, and is discussing with him the Workers' Educational Association; and two days later Miss Butler, author of *Social Conditions in Oxford*, is invited by him to address the C.S.G. on "Thrift," and she in her turn invites him to the Town Hall to "see literature" and to study the workings of the local committees. She is said, also, to have offered to Plater's Hall the use of a municipal cook. Rather later on, Father Plater is himself attending a seminar on Church and State at Dr. Carlyle's.

But not, I think, till October 1916 do I find the name Barnett House mentioned. This is a centre for social work in Broad Street, which was to become important for him. On that date he assisted at a lecture on municipal government by a Catholic resident, Mr. Gresham Wells, Dr. A. J. Carlyle being in the chair. By January 1917 Father Plater himself was found taking the chair there at a discussion on Trade Unions at which the Head of the Labour Exchange was present.

From the multiplication of incidents such as these there emerged his connexion with the Oxford Interdenominational Council for Social Reform.

In the autumn of 1916 a National Mission was preached by the Anglican Church throughout the country, and, in connexion with it, addresses by laymen had been given each Sunday in October in the Sheldonian Theatre at Oxford. The speakers urged that the "witness of the Christian Churches in regard to very pressing needs for the application of the 'Duty towards my Neighbour' had been

inaudible, or at least ineffective." This was a challenge. In November, at a meeting at Balliol College, Dr. A. J. Carlyle described the work done at Swanwick, and the Master of Balliol moved that "an Association be formed of members of all Christian denominations for the improvement of Social conditions in Oxford." The Principal of Mansfield, Dr. Selbie, supported this, and it was unanimously agreed to. On March 29, 1917, an Oxford Interdenominational Council for Social Reform was formed at Barnett House, Oxford, at a meeting of representatives of thirty-six Christian congregations in Oxford, and other members were co-opted. Five Standing Committees were then appointed to deal respectively with the Relations between Employers and Employed, the Standard of Life and Wages, Town Planning and Housing, Temperance, and Problems of Public Morality.

Catholics had from the outset been represented by the Rev. Father O'Hare of St. Aloysius's, Miss Fletcher of the C.W.L., and Mrs. Sandeman, who became one of the three secretaries of the council. Dr. Davey Bigg, vicar of the church of St. Philip and St. James, had been struck, long before, by Father Plater's book on retreats, and desired to have his presence in what was pleasantly known as the Noah's Ark, on the ground that it had all sorts of animals in it—"and all of them saved," I ventured to suggest to Dr. Bigg: he hazarded a fear, however, that some of them may have been eaten by others. But no one on the O.I.C.S.R. proved so cannibal. Father Plater, approached by Dr. Bigg on April 23, gladly came and was proposed (May 29, 1917) by Dr. Carlyle as chairman of the committee occupied with the Standard of Life and Wages. A well-

known Nonconformist member, though he had only heard Father Plater speak once, had been so impressed by his grasp of the situation, and also, like everyone else, so charmed by Father Plater's unaffected and friendly manner, that he vigorously congratulated the council on their choice. Dr. Bigg has spoken to me with admiration of Father Plater's devotion to his accepted duty. He worked with real self-sacrifice at the tedious business of tabulating the evidence, and at making interminable statistics intelligible and even interesting. I may add that there was a sub-committee which dealt with wage-earners' weekly household expenditure, and it was found that of all the very many workers' families that were visited, one only could ration itself up to the standard afterwards set by Lord Rhondda, and that one was childless. Father Plater's report made it quite clear that such was the level of wages in this city, that many working-men could not possibly earn enough to sustain life without causing their wives to do an amount of work that should never have been asked of them, and taking their children away from school for the same purpose. Though it was the late Mr. Sidney Ball who was the chairman of the committee of Relations between Employers and Employed, and not Father Plater himself, who, however, as early as May 1917 had served on the committee, I like to recall that when it was desired to draw up and circulate a simplified version of the Swanwick statement of Christian principles for Social Reform, one of Mr. Ball's committee, that is, Father Plater himself, "drew up the little book entitled *A Christian Social Crusade* for the C.S.G." This book instantly sold very well, and had far-reaching consequences of which I speak

in a moment. On October 22, 1918, Father Plater was, in fact, elected chairman of this committee and resigned the chairmanship of that which dealt with wages.

At monthly meetings, when the reports were read, Father Plater used to introduce friends, especially soldiers, cadets, or others, whose previous experience could add light. All sorts of little conversations and encounters used to take place afterwards at the Turl Club (see p. 228), and good relations were fostered. Relations of a cordial and fruitful kind were also ensured between these Christian students and the magistrates of the city and the officials of various Oxford groups; while beyond the Oxford district much help was given to the formation of similar councils, e.g. at Bournemouth and at Worcester; and there were conferences between the officers of the O.I.C.S.R. and those of the National Alliance of Employers and Employed and of the National Council for Social Service.

While, on the one hand, I do not wish of course to enter into the details of this council's work, but only to allude to it here in so far as it was one of the spheres of Father Plater's energy, yet I must say that I cannot give a true impression even of that energy, for the groups or individuals with whom he was thus assisted to come into contact were very numerous, but escape tabulation.

“The rapid growth of Interdenominational Councils in particular localities,” says the report for 1918, “has led to the desire for them all to be brought together in some all-embracing National Society”; and it was thus that a transition was effected to the movement called the Christian Crusade, of which I will now say something.

The Oxford Interdenominational Council was able, as I have said, to unite in various ways other local councils. It seemed clear that much would be gained if there could be a really united action of all Christian groups concerning themselves with social reform. The same persons who had been interested in the minimum programme decided, when in 1918 it became clear that a Summer School was again impossible that year, to create a Christian Social Crusade which should use the minimum programme as its basis. The idea was born on March 16, 1918, but not till January 1919 were definite steps taken to realize the scheme. On the 24th of that month, about fifty people met at the House of Lords, doubtless to facilitate communication with Bishop Gore and Lord Salisbury, both keenly interested in the plan. The only Catholics present were Bishop Bidwell and Father Plater. I need not dwell on the domestic problems that confronted the members of this large group; but I will only say that on Father Plater's motion, carried at a meeting in Easter week, the whole of the new Interdenominational Committee was merged into the Social Crusade Executive; and though the Interdenominational Conference continued, a number of isolated endeavours were brought to an end and incorporated in the "Christian Social Crusade."

In June 1920 the Rev. Will Reason, to whom I am indebted for much of this information, became its organizing secretary, and he tells me that now (1922) about forty councils are affiliated to the Crusade, while many others exist less closely, though definitely, associated with it.¹

¹ From Mr. Reason, 92 St. George's Square, S.W.1, further facts about the Crusade can be obtained, while the work that

The same quest took Father Plater to the London Mansion House.

I find no record of any visit there earlier than October 18, 1917, when he went there to join in a conference about the installation of Social Centres after the war. Cardinal Bourne, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Sir Arthur Yapp, and other distinguished persons were present. To Father Plater the main result of the day was that what he had seen and heard, together with the inspiration derived from a dinner with Mr. W. A. S. Hewins and Prof. Firth, moved him with a desire to start an Oxford School of Economics, to which I have alluded already.

No other references to Mansion House visits seem to exist till December 9, 1919, though I think he went there perhaps for private interviews on other occasions. On that date, however, he attended a meeting presided over by Sir Edward Cooper, the Lord Mayor, supported by a number of influential persons, and is put down on the printed report as "representing" H.E. Cardinal Bourne. The object of the meeting was :

"To consider the best means of promoting wholehearted co-operation among all classes to secure prosperity in industry, and satisfactory conditions of life for the workers."

And Sir Vincent Caillard was asked to move the first resolution, which was done in these terms :

"That wholehearted co-operation among all classes to secure prosperity in industry, and satisfactory conditions of life for workers, is essential in the national interest."

Father Plater did along this line is still best to be consulted in the second edition of *The Christian Social Crusade*, published in 1919 by the C.S.G.

After a speech by the Bishop of Peterborough, Father Plater was asked to support this resolution. I was not present ; but I remember very well his state of mind before he went to London for the meeting, and when he returned to Oxford rather later. He had made up a speech of some sort on the night before the meeting, while I was brewing him his midnight cup of tea. He wandered round and round the kitchen in a demoralized condition and lamented that he did not know what to say, that he did not want to go, that he would be out of place among grandees and people who, rightly or wrongly, he thought would not come to grips with the matter in hand. He had once or twice had interviews with very wealthy employers in whom he could find no principles of reform which they considered absolute and binding in justice ; their reforms were based rather on panic or on a pale benevolence than on what he considered to be essential obligations. He had on those occasions preached them a little sermon which astonished them no less than it failed to alter their hearts, though I have no doubt that it did show them that he approached the whole topic in a way that they never dreamed of regarding as suitable to business men. I told him he had better do the same, and not worry about a speech. I think he acted on this, for in the printed report I cannot see very much of what he had said he had better say. His speech, I feel, is honest to the point of being naive ; he at any rate felt happier after he had disburdened his soul, and I gather that the audience welcomed his roughness and his simplicity.

I quote, therefore, some sentences of what he said, from the printed sheet, checking them by some typed notes. It was his last speech of import-

ance in England, and so characteristic that I may be pardoned.

“MY LORD MAYOR, MY LORDS, LADIES, AND GENTLEMEN,

“You will all regret the absence of His Eminence Cardinal Bourne. In his absence the best thing I can do is to tell you on my own responsibility as a private individual just what I think of you and your movement.

“I have been called upon to support the resolution. Frankly, I do not think the resolution needs very much support ; in fact, it seems to me to be, as such resolutions generally are, rather in the air, and our business must be to bring it down to earth and put it into more definite form than it is in at present. I know, my Lord Mayor, there is a second resolution coming, according to which some of us are trying to get together to see whether something cannot be done, but I only put you on your guard against supposing, after this first resolution is passed unanimously, with prolonged applause, that anything very particular has been done. The work is really ahead of us.

“The object of this Association is, I am told, to promote good feeling between employers and employed. That is a matter of the greatest importance. We suffer in this country from the ridiculously impersonal way in which we state social problems. We have been taught by our economists to talk about Capital and Labour, when we really mean Sir Richard and Sir Thomas, who have got a lot of productive property, and Dick and Tom, who have not. Or again, we learn that there is a conflict between the Government and some important union, and very often it resolves itself into this, that some strong man in the Cabinet has got upon the nerves of a Labour Leader. There is generally, you will find, a very personal element in these social problems that are stated in such an abstract way, and therefore it is well that we should get to know one another and understand one another.

“But there is something else of greater importance which perhaps is not so obvious, and it is this : mere good feeling,

however necessary, is a very rickety basis for a social system. You want good feeling, yes, but you want more than that; you want good principles, sound and definite, and clear.

"We are a very good-natured people really, nobody more so. But if I may be allowed to say so, of my own native city, we are, like this merry London of ours, a little bit foggy. We live largely by instincts and feelings and compromises, and we jog along quietly and we never face, or seldom face, those big fundamental questions: What is the whole thing about? Where does man come from? Where is he going to? Is there a God above, and, if so, what then?

"Of course, you may ask me, gentlemen, what these big questions have to do with wages and dividends and things of that sort. I reply that they have everything to do with them, because religion is all or nothing. It is either a gigantic fraud, or else it is something that has got to run through every human activity from first to last. (Cheers.) And it has got, further, to express itself in our social and national institutions.

"Now, I take it, gentlemen, that you wish in some way to bring Christianity into this movement, otherwise I am at a loss to account for the ecclesiastical exhibition on the platform. Let me here ask you what may seem an impertinent question: it is certainly rather a searching question: *do you really mean it?* Christianity, I warn you, is not, as some rich men imagine, a kind of chloroform for soothing the discontent of the working-classes. Neither is it, as I am afraid some working-men have been led to believe, a curious Sunday morning recreation for the fashionably dressed. It is something very revolutionary and something very strong. I venture to say that if you were to introduce a little real Christianity into directors' meetings, or on to the Stock Exchange, or into a Trade Union Congress, or into the House of Commons, you might get some surprising results. (Cheers.)

"I wonder if you really want it. If you do, you have got to pay for it. Not in money, because there are some

things that money cannot buy. You have to pay for it by doing a very curious thing which is rather out of the line of ordinary business—you have to pay for it by carrying a cross. If you do not want it, well, gentlemen, let me tell you quite frankly and seriously, you are done for, and the country is done for, and I speak with all the experience of history behind me. There is no power that can lift up this conflict between employers and employed above the level of mere brutal force except Christianity. (Cheers.)

“I would urge every one of you, employers and employed, to join this Association. But before you join it to ask yourselves, Do I mean to play the game? If anyone feels tempted to come into it for what he or his class, whichever it may be, can get out of it, then I would urge him to get himself out of it as soon as possible. If, on the other hand, employers and employed will come into this movement ready to rediscover and to apply those old traditional conceptions of social life enunciated clearly 600 years ago by St. Thomas Aquinas, recalled in a dark period of industrial history by that great Nonconformist John Ruskin, and recently emphasized by Cardinal Bourne, if employers and employed alike will try to grasp the true functions of society and those great principles which have been set forth for them, then I say they can write the most splendid page of English history that has ever been written, more splendid even than the page which has just closed.”

I have but little to say by way of summing up this account of Father Plater's interdenominational activity. Nor can I even estimate how far it served a purpose. I think, indeed, that it was far from fruitless, but I also think that humanly speaking it never had time to bear the fruit it was capable of. Here more than anywhere else, perhaps, one is tempted to feel that Father Plater was cut off in the midst of a good work destined to be for ever left unfinished. It need not be that, if we regard

Father Plater as a man who left many and most important legacies. You may say that he was supremely valuable for what he taught us to do, or to try to do, for the example that he set, for the frightful responsibility he has put upon us, which would not have been there had we not known that certain things could be done, which we now know can be done, since he did them. This, more than what he actually did, will have lasting value, at any rate in this department. But I tremble to think what the waste of his energy might be, of which we, not he, would be guilty, were we not to shoulder our responsibility and carry on his work of charity and inspiration, of work for and with our neighbours, after the model he so bravely provided.¹

■ Perhaps the *Conference on Christian Politics, Economics, and Citizenship*, to be held in 1923, in the arrangements for which Father Plater was almost passionately interested, may afford to Catholics the opportunity of carrying on some of his work. Information concerning it may be obtained from the Conference Office, 92 St. George's Square, S.W.1.

Chapter XI

DURING THE WAR

*" O people who bow down to see
The miracle of Calvary,
The bitter and the glorious,
Bow down, bow down, and pray for us.*

*" Once more our anguished way we take
Toward our Golgotha, to make
For all our lovers sacrifice ;
Again the troubled bell tolls thrice.*

*" And slowly, slowly, lifted up
Dazzles the overflowing cup.
O worshipping, fond multitude,
Remember us too, and our blood.*

*" Entreat you for such hearts as break
With the premonitory ache
Of bodies, whose feet, hands, and side
Must soon be torn, pierced, crucified."*

ROBERT NICHOLS : *Battery Moving Up.*

FATHER PLATER never did the work of an official military chaplain. Whether he regretted not going to France, I do not know. When I met him again during the war, there was too much to do for anyone to spend time over retrospect, and I never thought of asking him what he would have preferred.¹ At home, however, he felt certain that it was best that he should not wear khaki. In black, he was more at his ease ; he had the satisfaction of knowing he was doing his work gratis ; any respect he might win was more certainly due to his personality and not to his rank ; and above all, he was more readily recognized as a priest.

In writing of his work during the years of war

¹ There was, later on, a scheme for sending him to lecture to the troops in France ; but, partly owing to the state of his health, it came to nothing.

I am most certainly not drawing comparisons between him and other priests who, each in his position, put out all their energies in the service of our soldiers. But in so far as his war work was a further revelation of his personality, besides being his main occupation for very many months, I must speak separately about it.

From the very outset Father Plater's imagination was fired by the thought of the incomparable opportunity of apostolic work offered by the new conditions. Never before, perhaps, had men been available in such large groups so easily ; never, it was to be shown, were their minds so susceptible to influences good or bad ; never were the ultimate issues of life so forced upon the attention of the dullest, the most frivolous, the most preoccupied ; never were the doubts, desires, spiritual hungers, questionings, loneliness of men's souls to admit of such intimate approach and sympathy. This he was able and anxious to give. For assuredly he did not just assess the war as an opportunity for propaganda. He thought hard about the situation ; he made plans not only for the needs of the moment, but looked well forward to after-war problems and tried to study the principles involved in the whole question of war itself, and in that of the " reconstruction " of which we used to hear so much : but all the way through he contributed to the full that power of personal devotion and understanding without which the cleverest of schemers are almost useless. Not only he gave his best and his inmost to the men themselves, but his heart positively bled if he thought he saw that here or there their needs were unrecognized, and invaluable chances, never to recur, were being neglected. It was agony to him to hear of hospitals unvisited,

camps unchaplained, souls unshepherded. Often enough I would deliberately refrain from telling him of the distressing instances of this which could not but be observed, lest he should at once seek to add another field to his labour, or, if clearly he could not help, pass nights of desperate insomnia during which his imagination would present to him the work which he could not fling himself upon.

It was a defect, or rather over-plus, of this quality which made him attempt not only too much, but work which could never come to anything or could never really be done well. I shall not hesitate to indicate what I think to be instances of this. But let us begin by being sure that Father Plater felt intensely and without any intermission that the conditions were beyond words extraordinary, and demanded the extremest effort that a man might contribute. Everything in him was raised, during these years, to its highest power; no nerves could have co-operated for very long with a spiritual activity so intense; and despite the grace which so visibly sustained him, I dare to say that he died of the war as truly as anyone.

While still at Stonyhurst Father Plater had written a pamphlet called *How to Help Belgian Refugees*,¹ and had had some experience of hospitals both at Whalley and at Birmingham, and had, need I say, learned a good deal about Army life from his many friends who had joined up and who wrote to or visited him. But he had had no direct experience on a wide scale. This began for him when he left for Wimbledon.

¹ This brought him anew into frequent correspondence with H.E. Cardinal Mercier, with whom the question of retreats had already put him into contact.

On September 23, 1915, he went to see one of his brothers who was Commandant of the Musketry at Prince Consort's Lodge in Windsor Park. He "surveyed the situation" and made his plans quickly. On Saturday, October 2, he returned with "altar requisites." Dinner in the Officers' Mess, followed by a "musical evening" in his brother's room, established him on a firm foundation of amity. He slept in a tent; also, to his annoyance, in a bed.

He said Mass next day in a lecture-room. The men arrive, some of them from a neighbouring camp, so well have they been "beaten up." He prepares them publicly for confession; he tells them to say the Rosary while he takes them one by one to the improvised confessional; they all come except a few who had been the day before, and a man, who it turned out, was not baptized. Even one such discovery, Father Plater felt, would have justified the whole expedition. Within the day he has made friends from colonels down to the last private; his tent door is besieged; he tells endless stories to the exhilarated crowd, and ends with "cake and pears" with the Wesleyan cousin of a lady whom he had met at Swanwick. . . .

However, the mass of this sort of work was done in the enormous camps at Epsom. It began in the convalescent camp on October 17, 1915. He has, again, excellent coadjutors; a Catholic colonel, and Lord Killanin, who was staying in the camp as a guest. He says Mass, abolishes a sermon in order to prepare the men for confession, tells the Colonel to say the Rosary, and shrives about forty astonished convalescents before Mass. He goes round a dozen huts with a Catholic sergeant, and finds Catholics in each who "had not seen a priest for months." At the Colonel's

suggestion he returns next day to give communion to his penitents ; discovers at least 100 Catholics who had not been to Mass the day before, and returns on a lorry with a soldier—" Sheffield man—who had read Balzac, Bergson, Laing, Darwin, etc." Twice more that week he goes ; " hardly any of the men had discovered the way to Church." He distributes rosaries and scapulars, and sells Catholic papers. He " rushes " one official for cushions, another for a harmonium. By the end of October, he is made honorary member of the Officers' Mess ; by mid-November he has hatched the idea of getting up retreats for soldiers.

By now he has a clientèle of 249 Catholic *patients* alone ; and above all, he has learnt to know Canadians and Australians ; and I depart from my rule by saying that it was now, December 4, that he met Corporal Clay Laner, D.C.M., mentioned four times in dispatches, an Australian war-convert, destined to be unrivalled, till peace sent him home again, for faithful help and friendship. And with his name I couple that of Pte. Jim McGrath, another Australian friend who came to know Oxford well. If ever they see these pages, they will like to know how much Father Plater valued their devotion. Let these two names stand as representative of very many whom, but for this encounter with Father Plater, I should never have known. It is one of the lesser tragedies of war that such hundreds of letters giving Army addresses add no hint of their senders' home address ; and of Father Plater's acquaintances, I can find the home address of but few. But since neither Australia nor Canada is likely to exact I should stand on ceremony, I allow myself to record, in this perhaps unconventional manner, how warm was the

affection that Father Plater felt for these men from the world's other side, how splendid was their responsive good-will, how unforgetting their friendship. And for the many who have fallen, we continue to ask eternal rest in God.

I need give no further details of Father Plater's very laborious ministrations in these Epsom camps—they varied between the giving of the Sacraments and running for miles beside a lorry, showing it the way through a fog with the help of a bicycle lamp—nor even of the first retreat, which occurred triumphantly on December 27–29. Father Plater has sufficiently described it in his little book: *Retreats for Soldiers*.¹ Suffice it, then, to say that the first retreat party consisted of nineteen men, including seven Australians, two Canadians, an Irish Guardsman, Scots, Londoners, and Lancashiremen. The somewhat nervous crowd reached Campion Retreat house, Isleworth, by charabanc, at one o'clock, and at three were plunged into retreat silence. On the last day, after the Papal blessing, the men were photographed, a custom which has carefully been adhered to. Father Plater took them home by way of Archbishop's House, where the Cardinal received them, showed them many treasures, and gave them his blessing. The C.W.L., whose hut was next door, gave the men tea at incredibly short notice; and they returned by supper-time to a mystified camp, where they gave highly coloured and indeed ecstatic accounts of their experience.

“Well, there it is,” writes the diary. “I have never seen anything so consoling. *Deo Gratias*.”

¹ *Retreats for Soldiers in War Time and After*, by C. Plater and C. C. Martindale; Harding & More, Ltd.

During the next seven months a dozen retreats were given to 172 soldiers from that camp. All were happy and successful.

Of various incidents, hilarious in the extreme and most of them unprintable, I will mention two: the first, for fairness' sake, lest I should seem to suggest that retreats work by magic, and transmute the men into a different sort of being; the second because Father Plater so much enjoyed it.

On Saturday, January 13, in the evening, he met one of his first retreatants, returning to camp very drunk. He took him to his chaplain's hut, sobered him down somewhat, led him back to his own hut, and put him to bed. He was very penitent by that time, and proceeded to wake up a Church of England neighbour and said: "You ought to be an R.C. I bet your parson wouldn't put *you* to bed if you got drunk." He was at the Sacraments next day.

After breakfasting in the cookhouse, where he had many friends, Father Plater went round to a certain Colonial ex-prize-fighter, who was in bed with a cold. He was not a Catholic, but asked, on the strength of the previous evening's incident, for a copy of the *Letter to a Catholic Soldier* of which I speak below. "But what," asked Father Plater, who never poached, "would your chaplain say?" The brief reply is as easy to imagine as it is impossible to print. As a matter of fact, Father Plater was on consistently good terms with ministers of all denominations, and had several for personal friends, and did not find co-operation in many matters difficult. One, a Baptist, actually made a retreat, was given a rosary, and when on the battle-field put it round his neck. He fell, wounded, and a Catholic

German, believing him to be a Catholic priest, rescued him from an otherwise certain death. So devious is God's providence.

I had better allude here to the soldiers' retreats which took place rather later at Oxford, though they are described fully in the book mentioned above. They were given at first at Begbroke Place, a charming house some seven miles out of Oxford, and intended, originally, to serve as a house of rest for aged or infirm priests. It was generously put at Father Plater's disposal by the authorities for a nominal rent. About these retreats there was little of special interest except the relative luxury of the house itself and its delightfully wide grounds and fields. But one recurring incident was found by all to be profoundly moving. During the week the Blessed Sacrament was not reserved in the chapel; so after the opening points of a retreat it used to be processionally fetched by the giver of the retreat from the Servite church hard by, the men reciting the rosary on the way there, and singing Eucharistic hymns on their return. In 1916 five retreats were given here, but the numbers were small—forty-two men in all. The men themselves were either wounded soldiers from the local hospitals, or Fusiliers, a large number of whom were then stationed at Oxford.

In May 1917 the retreats began again, and since I was soon able to co-operate with Father Plater, we could give them alternately to wounded men and to cadets, who had then replaced the Fusiliers. What I shall say about the hospital authorities, I can say with no less emphasis about the officers commanding the two cadet battalions. Far from interposing difficulties, they showed the utmost kindness once

they had overcome their initial bewilderment at the suggestion that any cadet would be willing to sacrifice his week-end in order to be preached at. Indeed, one C.O. went so far as to send general word round to his company commanders that any request for retreat or similar leaves that I might put in should be granted. This officer was not a Catholic, but the idea of the retreats had captivated him. Tact, I hope, responded to such courtesy ; anyhow, there were never any difficulties. Even when the food shortage seemed likely to create a very real one, the various colleges used to send round the substantial part of the men's rations—meat, bread, tea, and so forth—and the extraordinary ingenuity and hard work of our staff always provided ample and even succulent repasts, sometimes, I own, at the cost of drawing on the house's sugar ration for the next fortnight.

Of the ten retreats given in 1917, seven were to cadets, and when Begbroke became at last unavailable we continued the retreats in Campion Hall itself, and though we missed the fields and chances of moving about freely, these last retreats were very friendly, the men were even more at home.

Father Plater was able at least to inspire and encourage other soldiers' retreats elsewhere, but I do not know any statistics of these. He derived special pleasure from some which, towards the end, were given to American soldiers, of whom a considerable number were then stationed at Didcot. To this huge camp, or collection of camps, as to the neighbouring aerodromes, he of course made periodical excursions to say Mass, and paid very successful visits to the R.A.F. club at Witney. The American retreats were remarkable. The Blessed Sacrament

was exposed for an hour ; and twice, at least, all the men remained watching before it the whole hour.¹

I should like to say here how generous was the response of the Catholic public to our appeal for help, once Father Plater's apostolate had made the movement known. Thus an article in the *Tablet* brought me £400 in four weeks. There were a few large sums, but on the whole they were many but small, often just the 8s. needed to keep one man in retreat for the usual time. Money orders came from all over England, from Ireland, from St. Sulpice in Paris, from Rome, from New Zealand. Some came from people who had made retreats and knew what they meant. One, on the other hand, was accompanied by this brief and charming note :

“Am not very keen on making a retreat myself ; here is £1 for somebody else.—BOVRIL.”

The Navy sent its help, asking that sailors should not be forgotten ; parish priests, poor enough already ; chaplains on active service ; a woman whose lost handbag “ was found by a soldier and returned intact ” ; old ladies “ of small means living together and doing what we can ” ; faithful friends who resolved to have “ their soldier in retreat regularly each month ” ; or those who could send only perhaps a shilling, and signed themselves “ yours humbly, A Child of Mary ” and put no address. Catholic women clerks in Government offices collected among

¹ I should like to add that at one of these retreats he received into the Church a private soldier bearing the auspicious name of John Bull. The witnesses were Father M. D'Arcy, S.J., and Baron F. von Hügel.

themselves ; children resolved to keep every three-penny bit that came their way, for the retreats ; babies sent their halfpence. Some offerings arrived with difficult requests attached to them—that a retreat be given to Canadians, or to the Liverpool Irish. Another very frequent petition was easily and gladly responded to : “ Please ask my soldier to pray for me during his time before the Blessed Sacrament.”

Best of all perhaps were those from men who had experienced a retreat and remembered it back in France, in Salonika, in Africa. One letter I will transcribe ; it contained a little memento besides the money offering :

“ MY DEAREST FATHER,

“ Please accept this small offering, which I most humbly ask you to do in token of a never-ending friendship. Whenever you see this I hope you will ‘ pray for me,’ which I intend to do for you.

“ Asking for your blessing, I remain your spiritual Son,
“ E.

“ Please do not part from this ; it was one of my treasures.”

The writer died afterwards of wounds : I would ask those who read this book to remember Edward Thomas in their prayers.

Such are the exquisite revelations, alike of human nature and of God, which the work of war retreats could give.

In Oxford the recruiting-grounds where men for retreat were chiefly found were the Catholic Soldiers’ Club and the hospitals. I speak next, therefore, of Father Plater’s connexion with these two places.

The Third Southern General Hospital was

situated in Oxford and was divided up between many large buildings. The enormous examination schools formed its base, and annexed to these were the Durham Buildings of University College, and a large part of the college itself.

Almost immediately opposite was the Masonic Hall, a communication being made at the back with New College Gardens, in which two "terraces" were occupied with beds, and some six tents put up. Several large Army sheds occupied the quadrangle of the base. The Town Hall was made into a hospital for some 300 malaria cases; Cowley workhouse held some hundreds more orthopædic cases; a ward or two of the Radcliffe infirmary were set apart for soldiers; Somerville College was entirely given over to officers; two houses on Headington Hill harboured a few more officers, until one of these was closed and the other developed into the large permanent orthopædic hospital which, as I write, still contains a number of patients. Ashurst Asylum was afterwards set apart for shell-shock cases and was well looked after by the Capucins then, and now by the Salesians, and Father Plater, though acquainted with Dr. H. McDougall, now at Harvard, who was often there, had little to do with it.

It stands to reason that the parish clergy, who had plenty to do even before this immense field of work was flung open, could not possibly cope with it, despite all endeavours. The chaplaincy of the hospitals remained with the parish technically; but it became necessary, as well as a labour of love, for it to be put into commission. And as matters worked out, Father Plater became the regular visitor at the base, its adjacent buildings, the Masonic and the

gardens.¹ It became possible for us to say Mass daily at the base, twice a week at the Town Hall, once a week at Cowley, and intermittently at Somerville and Headington. Holy Communion was taken regularly to the bed-cases very early. It would be impossible to exaggerate the courtesy and kindness of the hospital officials. The Commandant, Col. Ranking, was generosity itself; Father Plater, after some time, had the joy of receiving him into the Church. The matron of the Cowley section spontaneously asked that Mass might be said there for the Catholics. The bulldog, by a unique privilege, was periodically allowed round the wards of the base and of the other hospitals, so much did he do to exhilarate, and thereby half-cure, the patients! You may say that from the humblest orderly to the chief authorities, not only facilities, but positive welcome, were offered us.

I could never exaggerate, or indeed adequately describe, Father Plater's devotion. He spent hours in his hospitals daily: half of the non-Catholics knew him as well as the Catholics did; he healed the minds of those no less than he did of these; along with his geniality, his flashing wit, his common-sense, his really motherly tenderness, went always "priestliness" as well; no one doubted the meaning of his mission; he had little in the way of cigarettes and what not to distribute—men were sufficiently supplied, as a rule, by local organizations—but never

¹ In these gardens there were, later on, some sick German prisoners; Father Plater's work at German here stood him in good stead: we were able to assist, fairly regularly, besides the Germans at Oxford, the German officers' camp at Holyport, Maidenhead, and the enormous prisoners' camp near Basingstoke, and Germans at Witney and Woodstock, and Austrians at Wantage.

for that was he less welcome ; rather, the more welcome was he because of his intimate, individual human sympathy, and his most manifest spirituality and unhesitating reliance on the supernatural.

I need, then, neither fear to allude to nor yet linger over his care that the men should as far as possible enjoy themselves ; it was he who initiated the practice of taking them out in their spinal carriages and bath-chairs ; he would show them round Oxford ; exhibit and explain to them the incomparable collection of relics at St. Aloysius ; have them to tea, or just for rest, in our small garden ; take endless trouble with their domestic difficulties or with their future. That this paved the way, in scores of difficult cases, to a return to the Faith, or to the use of the Sacraments, or to conversion, who can doubt ? But such things are the secret of the soul, the priest, and God. Enough to say that the response of the men was what, after all, could have been relied on—for nowhere, perhaps, so clearly as in hospitals, is seen the beauty of simple souls. Nature is glad to receive God's best. So they loved Father Plater, seeing how sincerely he loved them ; and they loved God the better, seeing that it was God's love that inspired his own.

I could dwell long on those tragic, laughable, bewildering, exhausting, exhilarating, but always happy and always holy years.

Two days after his arrival in Oxford, Father Plater went to see the Catholic Soldiers' Club in Turl Street. It had already existed for some time, thanks to the energies of the local clergy and of several generous members of the congregation. But in proportion as Father Plater grew to know his hospitals well, wounded soldiers naturally came in

much greater numbers to the club. It became, however, increasingly realized that the cadets, of whom two battalions, IV and VI, were not long afterwards quartered at Oxford, ought to have a Catholic club accessible to them; the problem was, that it was quite impossible to open two clubs, while an Army regulation made it equally impossible for private soldiers or N.C.O.s to share a club with cadets. An arrangement was at last arrived at by which hospital men and their friends used the club till "tea-time," and cadets from tea-time onwards. If there was any overlapping—well, the two categories of men remained discreetly invisible to one another, and no discipline-wrecking fusions occurred.

The club consisted of three rooms, in the first of which were two—not full-sized, but quite usable—billiard tables, and a writing and newspaper table; a couple of steps led up to the other two rooms, which communicated by archways between which was the fireplace. In the third room was the canteen. The canteen was worked by some Oxford ladies, whose persevering self-devotion was quite beyond all praise. They coped with the incredible difficulties of war-time catering, coupled with those caused by the very irregular attendance on the part of cadets—for the R.A.F. cadets, who were for a relatively brief time in Oxford, did not get their evenings off simultaneously, but by couples of colleges (where they lived) at a time. In some colleges there were few, if any, Catholics at a given moment; then, a dozen or a score; and one, who might have struck the club unexpectedly, would bring a crowd of friends; altogether both tea and dance refreshments were difficult to assess beforehand. Yet there was never a dearth; and above all, never a lack of

attendance. These ladies also formed a committee, and if a man wanted to bring a partner to a dance, he first sent her name to this committee, which then invited her. Tact on the part of the committee was, as a matter of fact, well anticipated on the part of the man ; and the safeguard which the system clearly ensured was, as it turned out, never needed. Dances occurred on Saturdays, then on Wednesdays too, and finally Sundays as well. It is pleasant to recall that the Sunday dances provoked very little criticism. Their advantages were only too obvious. Nor is it boasting to say that the dances became, in a true sense, the most popular in Oxford. There were other dances, of course, popular, and numerically more sought for ; but some of them, at times at least, had elements not to the liking of the lads who wanted a thoroughly good time and yet wished to avoid annoyances. Non-Catholics were even more numerous, on some occasions, than Catholics at these Catholic dances, and valued their experience. I should be embarrassed, too, to say how many men, during these seemingly uproarious hours, offered themselves as anxious for the Sacraments, or candidates for instruction (or reinstruction) in the Faith. Perhaps the Colonials came in the greater numbers. They were always popular, and perhaps because of that, very often lonely. They came to the club, not only because they found gaiety there, but because they felt at home, in an atmosphere so simple, so cheerful ; so friendly, and so innocent.

The club had, of course, its ups and downs ; but never, save once (and then the men themselves coped with the situation), an unpleasant incident. I have dwelt on this club, not only because I loved it, but because Father Plater did ; and one or other of us

was there daily; and letters from the other side of the world still allude to it with affection and even regret. I need not specify among the concerts, parties, and so forth incidental to the history of all such clubs, more than the open-air dances in the exquisite old-world garden at Black Hall, put so generously at our disposal by Mrs. Morrell.

So convinced was Father Plater of the value of special clubs for Catholics, and, I may say, so stimulated by the sight of what the United States and Canada were doing for Catholic soldiers in London, that he became inspired with the desire to open a "Catholic Officers' Club" there, and a beginning was indeed made, with the help of a strong committee. But the idea came too late in the war (at the end of 1917), and expense proved an unsurmountable obstacle if the club were to be residential, central, and sufficiently large to be attractive. The club which in London most won Father Plater's heart was the Bulldog Club; it was undenominational, and situated in Chapel Street, Edgware Road. I think it was Mr. Leslie Toke who first introduced Father Plater to it, and the priest and his dog became so well known there, that I should not be surprised if the men ultimately believed that the club was named after Jimmy. Catholics came there in large numbers, and were often astonished, almost aghast, to find that before they left it they had been shriven, an event which they were far from foreseeing when they entered. And Father Plater found that non-Catholic visitors needed and welcomed his spiritual encouragement no less, for the club was always full of men who were due, next day, for return to the front.

Father Plater had also a special affection for the C.W.L. Hut at Lydd in Kent. It was opened on Whit-Sunday, and he went there on August 1 and stayed till the 7th; he returned the moment his Ampleforth clergy retreat (which began that day) was over, and stayed from August 22 to 28, and again from the 29th to September 8.

But I cannot do better than use an account of his stay at Lydd very kindly sent to me by Mrs. Gompertz, who had charge of the hut there, though it is the reader's sympathy which must seize the atmosphere which my condensation of her pages inevitably loses. As ever, it was one of cheerfulness, of electrical human energy, of almost tangible grace.

Lydd was served from Hythe, whence the priest had to bicycle the twelve miles to and fro, and had but few hours to spare when he got there. Moreover, the church was the hut, open as a club from four to ten. How, then, should even a resident priest give the evening services which constitute so much of a "mission" such as Father Plater was asked to give? "We didn't know Father Plater." He grasped the situation at once, and made it simply a "personal mission." That is, the influence a mission exerts on the mass he resolved to apply no less effectively to individuals. Even before arriving at the hut, he had been to the brigade office and had the official list of all the Catholics; but besides this, he forthwith visited the sergeant-major of each battery and each battery itself, preferably at dinner-time. In an incredibly short time he knew each Catholic of the British and of the Canadian camp, and each possible Catholic, for these were not a few, and he was able to receive three men during his stay and hand over others to the Hythe clergy or to the C.W.L. ladies, who came to be supposed, in popular myth, to serve with the canteen teapot in one hand and catechism in the other.

It had not been easy to find him a room; the "Lyddites" were not too well disposed to Catholics: but in a day or two, his landlady, her husband and brother, and her little girls were so devoted to him that when he announced in 1917 that there was a chance of his return these excellent people kept writing to inquire; they would rather lose a chance of letting their rooms than that he should have to go elsewhere. Alas! he never came back to Lydd.

Even while walking up, on the first day, to the hut, he had accumulated a crowd of cheery friends and brought them all to tea. It was useless to make him special tea; he never was in time, and when he did come was surrounded by the men and made up on cakes for the lunch he most certainly had missed. He chose his cakes with a schoolboy's zest, and once, when Mrs. Gompertz had overlooked a man, waiting for cakes, while she was serving Father Plater, she was enchanted to see the man push his plate forward exclaiming: *Nobis quoque peccatoribus*. . . . Perhaps he was one of those ex-seminarians of whom there were more than one in those camps.

Mass was at 7, and the day was spent in making often quite intimate acquaintance with the men. On his first visit to the Canadian camp, he saw some men filing out of a tent, and he called out, "Are any of you R.C.s?" "No, sir," was the answer, "we're C.B.s!" However, the maple-leaf contingent rose at Mass next Sunday from a dozen to quite eighty. He spent the evenings in the club; at any moment a man would disappear behind the curtain which, during the day, veiled the altar. This meant that he wanted to go to confession. Father Plater followed him. . . . At 9 he said the rosary, and as long as Sergt. C., a sturdy Catholic from the North, and Father Plater's right-hand man, was there, this practice continued. [Sergeant C. was not long afterwards killed in Palestine. R.I.P.] One striking incident. The Sunday before his first absence, he had insisted in his sermon on the Act of Contrition "which a man must always help a dying comrade to say

when no priest can be found." He dwelt long upon this duty. Next day Mrs. Gompertz, on her way to the hut, was met by a woman. "Are you a Catholic, lady? There's a woman here wants you!" In a cottage hard by a gunner and his two little daughters were crying their hearts out while his wife lay dying of hæmorrhage in another room. She had heard of Father Plater and asked for him. He was away. They wired to Hythe; the priest there, too, is away, and cannot come till later. Mrs. Gompertz, anxious, meets Sergt. C. "Did you think of Father Plater's Act of Contrition?" he asks without a moment's hesitation. Alas! she had not made it. "Go back at once," the usually most polite of sergeants commanded the "Commandant," "and make it while I borrow or steal a bike for Hythe." She returns, and as she gets there the sergeant flashes by on a motor-bike, "waving towards the cottage and mouthing something that I am convinced was 'Act of Contrition.'" Strange fatality! The priest arrives, anoints the dying woman, and asks to be notified of the arrangements for the funeral. But to the doctors' amaze the woman was cured, and it was the gunner who, after a few days, was lying dead.

Father Plater had a knack of getting up the most wonderful concerts, and it was noticed that no joke or line that was undesirable ever marred the hilarity of those in the C.W.L. Hut at Lydd. There is a famous song about ducks. The men had a parody on this; here the ducks were replaced by gunners, who went waddling out at night, said the refrain, "Some to dig and some to cut, But we'd rather be in the Catholic hut." It was really Father Plater's visit that gave the C.W.L. Hut its renown [or so the modesty of its staff insists]. After all there were six other huts of all denominations and dimensions. . . . "I conclude by registering a belief that every egg laid in the countryside found its way into Father Plater's hands. . . . He and his landlady's brother simply scoured the district for them." . . . But the day which held these excursions began always with Mass and ended with the rosary, and the Holy Com-

munions and confessions made in the hut proved from them all how enduring was this "mission's" influence.¹

A quite different part of Father Plater's war-work consisted in his writings. The only production of his which will have permanent value here is the *Primer of Peace and War*. He did not compile it single-handed ; much of the historical part is due to Mr. F. F. Urquhart ; and Father J. Keating, editor of the *Month*, and Father V. Moncel, S.J., contributed, special sections. Canon W. Barry also gave much help. Part I deals with international morality in general, Part II with morality and war in particular, Part III with right and wrong efforts to ensure peace, and Part IV gives a very valuable historical conspectus of the development of the Catholic idea of war. I feel sure that this little book, which was published for the C.S.G., will never lose its utility.

His pamphlet, *How to Help Catholic Soldiers*, contained much practical advice, but has not, I think, many lasting qualities. With it I must, however, mention his *Letters to Catholic Soldiers*, of which he wrote the first while at Wimbledon. 28,000 copies of it were distributed. He wrote altogether four, of which the last, at the request of the Knights of Columbus, was addressed to Americans. These letters were sharply criticized, not so much because of their contents, as because Father Plater wrote

¹ On June 8, 1918, he went for a short week-end to the fine C.W.L. hut in the great Canadian camp at Bramshott : he preached at 9, lectured at 3, preached again at 7.30 and 8.30 to about 500, 400, 200, and 100 soldiers respectively. He was overjoyed to repay at Oxford the hospitality that Bishop Fallon, of London, Ont., Father John Knox, C.F., and others gave to him. He paid, too, a visit to Woolwich Arsenal to lecture on reconstruction problems, but had no time to pursue this enterprise.

them. "Why," it was asked, "does Father Plater take upon himself to address Catholic soldiers? He is not a chaplain; still less, chaplain-general." Possibly this chapter may in some measure answer that. He was picturing, at first, the masses of men he had already seen, some of them quite unchaplained; many, certain to welcome any word from him; all of them needing a particular kind of help which he—I do not say only he—could give them. He never thought that others could not give it, but asked whether it was always given, and had to answer, "Sometimes, no." He could never know all the men, he could not even remember all whom he had met; yet he yearned passionately after the soul of each. Regardless, then, of etiquette, regardless of all save the multitudes he so vividly visualized and for whom he "had compassion," he wrote his letters in the style which, he believed, would most appeal to them. Whether it did so on a quite general scale, I cannot say. To very many it did, and answers reached him in quantities from men he had never seen. The consolation of one soul would have justified the letters to his conscience, and hundreds were so consoled. As for their style he was sensitive about it. He knew it was "journalistic"; the short, slangy sentences may have jarred on his sense of literary fitness, but not of human fitness; and, after all, those who criticized the letters severely were not those to whom the letters were addressed.¹

What no one could criticize was the plan for private correspondence with Catholic soldiers at the

¹ He also shared in some definitely non-political propaganda work during the war, which consisted in writing for some foreign publications, French, American, and neutral, a number of articles setting forth Catholic activities in England.

front. He did not invent this, but he encouraged it so vigorously that he contributed very substantially to its success. The work grew so enormous that it was confided to the community of Corpus Christi House at Leicester, and requests from soldiers that they might be written to were at one time coming in at the rate of 1,000 a month. The letters thus sent were often "instructional" and carried on the teaching of very many men who had been hastily instructed in the Faith and received as circumstances best permitted. Many were addressed to the parents or sweethearts of the men; they were overjoyed to know that Catholic influence was not lacking amid all the opposing influences of the Army. One pathetic fact. A recipient of one of these letters answered that it was the first letter he had ever received in his life. So lonely may a man be in a crowded world.

More solid in appearance was a book Father Plater edited, *Catholic Soldiers*, by 60 Chaplains and Many Others.

On December 11, 1917, Baron F. von Hügel called to say that a committee which had for some time been concerned with obtaining a general view of the religious state of the manhood of the country, as isolated, so to speak, and observable in the Army, invited Father Plater's collaboration, or, at least, his presence at their meeting next day. He attended it at Lady Margaret Hall, found about twenty persons of all denominations assembled, and was most cordially greeted.

"We started work at 4.30 and continued till 6.30. I began by giving my impressions and the whole of the rest of the time answered questions. All were most sympathetic and helpful. I was able to be quite frank."

I need not detail the results of this conference. It suffices to say that it was felt that Catholic evidence was so different from any other that it would be better if a separate book were made of it. *The Army and Religion* (Macmillan) did, no doubt, allude, I think four times, to Catholics, but must emphatically be viewed as giving a survey of the religious state of the Army exclusive of the Catholic soldiery. I understood very definitely from Father Plater that this was to be clearly stated in the Preface. To my reading, however, the book is left ambiguous, and I dare say many might take it not quite for what it is, but as giving statistics for the Army's religion, Catholics included. Perfect amity, however, was preserved between Father Plater and its editors, in so far as they were in relation with one another.

This, however, was the direct occasion of Father Plater determining to edit a book of Catholic evidence such as had been suggested. I cannot pretend I ever thought this a wise plan, nor do I think it was successfully carried out. He drew up a questionnaire of which the divisions appeared to me to overlap, and in which certain items barely admitted of an answer. Even this preliminary document bore trace of that feverish anxiety to do a lot and to do it quickly that then possessed him. Indeed, he was restive about the subject, and withdrew somewhat into his shell when, in conversation, we approached it. The questionnaire was hurriedly sent out to chaplains, officers, and men ; but at haphazard, with certain notable omissions, so that feelings were hurt, and all real statistics were lacking in the finished book, which was published in 1919 by Messrs. Longmans. I think, however, that even so,

it had its value as a stimulus, or might have had, if it had become well known by private circulation, and had then been corrected and much amplified. A very notable opportunity was, I dare say, lost ; one can only hope that this premature publication may not hinder the production of a more official work of permanent value. I cannot but fear, then, that this little book meant much labour nearly wasted. Yet it contains, after all, stories of incidents which are of incomparable beauty ; its chapter on the experiences of Catholic chaplains who attended military executions is, I think, unique ; and there is enough evidence to prove conclusively to what astounding spiritual sublimity the devotion to Our Lady and to the Blessed Sacrament can lift the simplest souls.

Let me conclude this chapter by recalling that it was inconceivable that Father Plater should forget the only instrument that in the long run he valued : prayer. In January 1917 he arranged for exposition of the Blessed Sacrament in the parish church at Oxford, to take place every first Friday of the month from 10.30 to 4. It included a " Priests' Half-hour," during which members of the various religious houses of Oxford filled the sanctuary.

I may have omitted some of his enterprises proper to this period, but I shall have said enough to show that he laboured might and main to do his best for the thousands of men who were passing, bewildered and with starving souls, through a crisis the horror of which they often failed to acknowledge, even to themselves. Only when a man went right down within himself did he really guess—in how many cases !—what he was fearing and enduring and remembering ; at such hours, and between them, only

the tenderest, most imaginative, most courageous sympathy is of avail; this Father Plater gave till he nearly died of it, having saved, by so doing, how many from misery; how many from embitterment; how many, I easily believe, from sheer insanity; how many from despair!

From innumerable letters he received from men in camps or at the front, I will quote two paragraphs only, the first from a Connaught Ranger, which must stand as typical. It proves, indeed, the fullness of the human affection he elicited, and that from that humanity God was not left out.

“Just received your very welcome P.C. I have been looking for your letter every day; you have no idea how I look forward for them; every time I read them it seems as though you were talking to me. I read them through very often because it means much to think you are so far away and yet seem so near to me. I know you will always be my friend, and it is a consolation to think you have such a great friend. I am still keeping my promises, thanks to the great goodness of God and your prayers on my behalf. Will leave you now; we have just come back after being out in the rain all day, firing our course, and as you will guess wet through, but I could not rest until I had answered your very welcome P.C. So, good-night and God bless you.”

The second must show how firm and wise was his advice in the critical hours of August 1914; how far removed from hysterical militarism, and from indulgence or cynicism.

“As to enlisting, to a great many of my friends I would say, ‘Do it by all means. It is the right thing to do.’

“But your case is not so simple. The call of country comes first at a time like this, and is the way to do God’s

will. But, as things stand, it may be better service to God and country for you to wait.

"First of all I take for granted that you really want to do the better thing, whatever it may cost. I think I may take this for granted. You have the right 'detachment.'

"Now as things are the service you can do by enlisting is not very great. You have fair health, but no other qualification. If you had been in a college O.T.C. or something of the kind, it would have been different. Of course, there is *example* to be considered: but would your action be likely to influence others? To a man who had lived a soft life in the public eye, I would say 'go.'

"On the other hand, there *is* work of public utility which your life and training have fitted you for—and you know its importance though you underestimate your ability to do it. There may not be much to be done in this line at the moment; but there will be more than ever later on, I think.

"I don't want to make up your mind for you; but I do want you to make up your mind wisely. . . .

"So turn it over and pray about it and make a point of frequent Communion, as you probably do. . . . Forty French S.J.s have gone to serve from Hastings and the Provincial is in the ranks. Our Belgian colleges are full of wounded."

But the refrain in his own notes is: "Dear X and dear Y have gone. God bless them. They will do good wherever they go. But I must pray *and suffer* for them."

Chapter XII

EXPEDITIONARY

*“ Et qu’importent les maux et les heures démentes,
Et les cuves de vie ou la cité fermente,
Si, quelque jour, d’au fond des brouillards et des voiles,
Surgit un nouveau Christ, en lumière sculpté,
Qui soulève vers lui l’humanité
Et la baptise au feu de nouvelles étoiles.”*

VERHAEREN : *Les Villes Tentaculaires.*

FATHER PLATER’S expeditions beyond Oxford were not made haphazard. They had for objective places which quite easily fell, or seemed destined to be formed, into groups, having for centre great cities like Newcastle, Birmingham, Manchester, and Liverpool. One definite group was indeed formed, visits to which became known to Father Plater’s friends as his Tyneside tours, and so he himself knew them. Others, as I shall repeat, were in process of formation when he died. It may seem strange that in this list of towns I do not mention London. In London, of course, he often was ; but he fought shy of it. It was so huge as to be unmanageable. He could not visualize it. It had not even one temperament, like Tyneside, which in all conscience was huge enough. Then the South did not respond as the North did. Possibly the very difficulty of getting anything known in London save by dint of much expensive advertisement, often prevents the great assemblies that seem to come natural to the North ; but he definitely thought of London as “respectable” and unenthusiastic. Catholicism has in fact not only a different temperament there, but a different temperature. However, I am fairly sure that had Father Plater lived, or begun his career, in London, he would have become a real force there. We shall see that towards the end of

his life he was just beginning to take part in public meetings that involved many besides Catholics, and you may even say, not Catholics predominantly.

I wish to anticipate an impression which I should hate to give, that Father Plater came crashing into other people's parishes, arrived unasked, acted independently, formed study-clubs and offered advice, and then disappeared, leaving a gasping clergy and an excited populace to cope with the bewildering work which he had added to what they already felt to be more than sufficient. It is true that Father Plater had an imagination which, when he had seen one thing, showed him half a hundred more ; and a constructive sense which, when he saw anything good in itself, made him want to see it done, and indeed showed him at once the outlines of the way in which it should be done. And into the triple vision of the thing that needed to be done, the thing that ought, consequently, to be done, and the way to do it, he poured the full power of his personality, accustomed to create. He was certainly not likely, then, to hold his hand or even his tongue. But I will insist that either he went only where he was invited ; or else suggested himself when it was clear that people were too shy or too merciful to invite him ; or, at his most "pushful," proposed this or that which he thought that he could do to help : he was as ready to help as he was grateful for help ; he never wanted to supplant ; he was almost too timid of intruding ; he argued that the work he hoped from those whom he stimulated by retreat or lecture or new organization would go straight and always first and foremost to the parish, the local group, the immediate duty and claim. He was so generous-minded himself that he could not dream of jealousy

or narrow exclusiveness in others ; it simply did not occur to him ; he thought that everyone would be glad to join in united labour for the cause of all. His ideal was, in fact, all for all. The proof that he did not delude himself is the astonishing affection that he everywhere encountered. My experience here is slight ; but I should be surprised if many priests found in any part of England and beyond it, as he did, so spontaneous and rich a welcome from their fellow-clergy, both parish priests and dignitaries. He always won the recognition that he always co-operated and never interfered. For a man as "personal" as he was, this was a great triumph of humility.

Father Plater made several tours, as I have already said, through Tyneside. The first is that of which I have already spoken. It was scarcely premeditated ; anyhow Father Plater did not guess how it would develop. It was rather a prolonged stay there than a regular tour such as he afterwards began to make year by year. He was there for eight weeks, and gave during them some 160 addresses. It is a good example of his doing things by instinct, which could be repeated later almost without change, as part of a method. So I propose to relate the outline of these tours, quite conscious that the details can scarcely be of interest taken one by one. But taken altogether, I think they are needed to make clear the work that these tours implied for Father Plater, and also the kind of work that I think might well have been developed to an interesting and perhaps novel extent had he lived. I was convinced that he had a real chance of a much prolonged and useful life if he eliminated as many secondary jobs as possible, and constructed his public year out of two or three

massive pieces of work instead of doing innumerable and harassing odds and ends that anyone else could have done and that drove him frantic because of the way in which they broke his days up and prevented him from getting at his real work till late at night. We used, in fact, to go through the list of his engagements and see which we thought could be eliminated without real loss to anyone, leaving the two or three great events of the year, like, precisely, the Tyneside tours. But then this clashed sharply with a resolution that he had taken—he thought it was a resolution, but I think it was rather just a yielding to a natural bent of affectionate helpfulness—that he would never say “No” to a request. And then, could anyone else have done the things that he did, and that “wasted” his time, as well as he did? I doubt it; it was precisely because Father Plater did them that people valued them; they did not guess how remorseless were the exactions, but they were unforgettingly grateful, not because they had spent their time with a celebrity, but because of the real happiness they had been given. I could never give more than a half-hearted consent when people said that Father Plater was frittering away his time. From every reasonable standpoint, this was true. Yet he could never have diffused his influence, I think, without it. Still, one could yield to reason when it became necessary to give up a percentage of work in any case, to the extent of advising him to adhere at all costs to enterprises like the Tyneside tours. On Tyneside itself there are said to be some 70,000 Catholics, and 100,000 more are said to be within easy reach; it is clear, then, how massive might be the effect of a recurrent visit such as those I shall describe.

Of the eight weeks spent there in 1913 I have already said something. In 1914 he went indeed to Gateshead, and gave a retreat at Whinney House, and had some interviews with the local clergy, but nothing that could be called a tour was made. On December 26 of that year he went North again, though feverish and with a very bad throat. None the less he preached at Willington Quay on the Sunday morning, had to drop out a lecture at Blaydon in the afternoon, but spoke on Belgium in the Co-operative Hall at Wallsend in the evening. A lecture next day at Walker, and a sermon at Hebburn on Tuesday, 29th, and another lecture at Willington Quay, and a long visit to Newcastle study-club brought him to the end of the "momentous" year 1914. The next year began with Blaydon and Crawcrook lectures, followed on January 3 by a "rally" at Gateshead of some 300 men from various parishes, to whom he spoke in the afternoon and preached in the evening before a procession of the Blessed Sacrament, in which 250 of his men walked. The Crawcrook men came too, and he says it was "a new world to them." On the 4th and 5th he visited Jarrow, pushed forward study-club ideals, and returned to St. Mary's Hall on the 6th. Manifestly these visits so far had but a preparatory character, but save for the organization there will be but few elements added in subsequent years.

The tour of 1916 was very short. It lasted from January 5 to 10. He spoke at Willington Quay, Hebburn, and Gateshead, and his topics seem all of them connected with war problems: "Spiritual revival in war-time"; "True and false patriotism"; "Is war immoral?" On Sunday, January 9, he attended a "rally" of 400 men, preached, and wel-

comed the assistance of Mr. Urquhart from Balliol, who made, says Father Plater, "a fine speech," all the more opportune because Father Plater was himself very hoarse. It was from this expedition that he returned to find himself Rector of Oxford.

On January 1, 1917, he started on the first completely organized tour, arriving that evening at Middlesbrough and being taken across the Tees by the "monstrous transporter" to Port Clarence. Next day, after a visit to the Cathedral, he was called for by two foremen of Messrs. Bell's works, which he inspected from 3 to 6.

"Roof of a steel furnace fell in while I was near it: general stampede. Talked to many of the men. All get living wage . . . no strikes . . . very many Catholics work there. Irishmen and Poles alone can stand heavy weight. All Irish at Port Clarence."

He then lectured at the club to about 150 men; the night shift, which began at ten, preventing many from attending.

"Talked about spiritual and social results of Reformation, liberal economics, Catholic revival, study-clubs, W.E.A., etc."

All these lectures were followed by long informal talks and sales of C.S.G. literature.

On January 3 he visited Stockton and lectured to an audience of 200 that night at Willington Quay. On the way, "an utterly fagged out soldier" had gone to sleep, in the train, on Father Plater's shoulder. Touched by the priest's kindness, he called next day, though not a Catholic, in time to see an aeroplane come down in flames just not on Father Plater's head. He lectured that night to 100 men, "but

very keen." The subject was "The Church and Labour," and the questions many. "Fine study-club: about 30 men, intelligent." Next day he lectured at Gateshead: "small audience—about 50—but keen." The 6th was spent in visits, and he went to Blyth, where he preached at High Mass next day, visited clubs, held a "rally" at 3 in the Co-operative Hall, of some 250 men, and preached again that night and carried the Blessed Sacrament in procession. He returned the next day, after lunching with Mr. Corballis, Commissioner of Scouts for Newcastle and Acting-Commissioner for Northumberland, to Stockton: "fine club: about 260, including 160 boys." The study-club, interrupted by the war, was being re-started. Over 250 listeners to his lecture on Catholics in England, which, he frankly notes, "delighted the men." On the 9th he had much discussion with Father Pickering, one of the staunchest friends among the many friends of Tyneside, and spoke to about 40 Newcastle Catenians that night, insisting much, as through all this tour, on the value of the C.Y.M.S. Wednesday, January 10, was spent almost entirely in visits, and in discussion with Mr. Corballis especially, concerning a C.S.G. bureau in Newcastle and the best way of working it. On the 11th he went by way of Gateshead to Middlesbrough, where he lectured to 280 men at the club, and next day this tour came to an end with a long visit to the Bishop.

The Tyneside tour of 1918 was still better organized. He went on December 29, 1917, to Newcastle, and I like to add that on these occasions he always broke the journey at York, where the Bar Convent gave him a hospitality that he found most grateful, and the chance of conversation with his old friend

Mother Loyola, whose books he constantly gave to converts, finding their "spiritual sanity and sane spirituality" just what they wanted. On Sunday the 30th he preached morning and evening at St. Michael's, Newcastle, and addressed the inaugural meeting of the St. Michael's sub-branch of the Tyneside C.T.S. in the afternoon. On Monday he lectured at Stanley, in the splendid club-room that was once a laundry. On Tuesday to Brooms, where he lectured in "neutral territory," a non-Catholic hall,

"which encouraged a number of Socialists to attend: at least, they called themselves Socialists, but there seemed to be nothing the matter with them except that they were suffering from suppressed Catholicism. They just drank in Leo XIII and were completely cordial."

At Blyth on the 2nd he lectured again, but felt ill, and could not say Mass next day. The doctor kept him in bed till dinner-time; then he got up, went to Willington Quay, talked to "180 adults," and got to bed at midnight. At Chopwell on the 4th, another lecture; and next day at Byker, where the fine Dominican church has the strange history of having been bought and then transplanted to its present place, stone by stone. That night he unveiled a Roll of Honour, and preached morning and evening, and spoke at the C.Y.M.S. "rally" in the afternoon, when there were about 400 men present, and he was given the two little silver candlesticks which now stand in front of the little statue of Our Lady in the Chapel at Campion Hall. He had started several new study-clubs, and was pleased with the perseverance of most of the old ones. Thence, on the 7th, to Middlesbrough, where he not only

spoke in the Cathedral, learning much about that vast parish of 12,000 souls, but also at St. Patrick's, where he had not yet been. By way of Port Clarence he went on the 10th to Stockton, and at his lecture there on "The Christian Social Crusade," to 200 persons, the Vicar of Stockton and four other Anglican clergymen were present. This gave him the chance of explaining adequately the limits within which Catholics could co-operate with the members of other religious denominations. The Vicar moved the vote of thanks, and the visit left him happy. After one more lecture next day, he went to Hartlepool and on the 12th preached and lectured there and at West Hartlepool that day and the next, and returned to Oxford on the 13th.

On December 28 he started on the 1919 Tyneside tour. He went to Hebburn, preached morning and evening and lectured to 250 men afterwards on the Church and Socialism, and was well heckled, which he always liked. From Gateshead to Stanley, and thence to his beloved Leadgate; to South Shields and back to St. Michael's, Newcastle, till by way of Byker he reached Willington Quay for Sunday. At Gateshead he had found that the situation was being tackled from both ends, so to say: there was a sort of "super study-club," very advanced, and also much keenness to organize boy scouts who should, later on, join the study-clubs almost automatically. After the meeting at Stanley, to which the Central Labour College sent its questioners, he notes:

"Throughout my ten days' frank sparring with revolutionary Socialists I did not hear a single discourteous word against the Catholic Church. On the contrary, their respect for the Catholic priesthood was most marked and their

readiness to listen to Catholic teaching could not have been surpassed by a Catholic audience." After the Leadgate meeting, "the Socialists seemed quite ready to endorse Leo XIII; somehow they seemed to have the wrong label on. 'Educate the miners and they will come out of the pits,' said one, 'and stop out.' 'Not if they are Catholics,' answered a Catholic miner. 'Why? would the Catholic Church force them to stop in the pits?' 'No, but to be a Catholic makes even dull work interesting.'"

At Willington Quay the C.Y.M.S. "rally" took place, after which he was presented with a snuff-box, which since his death I have ventured to return as a memento, and better still,

"a couple of hundred men in the audience have volunteered to raise each of them a pound for the C.S.G. 50,000 Shilling Fund. These miners and shipyard men know what the Guild is doing and decide to back it. How many well-to-do Catholics, I wonder, will follow their lead?"¹

After meeting the Gateshead study-club on Monday, he went to Chopwell on Tuesday the 7th, where he lectured to 200 men, following this by an hour's discussion with

"a compact bunch of Revolutionary Socialists surrounding their fluent and earnest leader. One knew at once from what quarter the questions would rain in; and they did. Here again was courtesy and good humour combined with earnestness; a realization too that the Catholic Church was not an enemy to the working-man. The Socialist leader seconded the vote of thanks with the utmost cordiality."

It was arranged that he should return in Lent, but he first went to Middlesbrough, arriving on

¹ Some of these quotations are from the accounts of his tours which he wrote for the *Catholic Times*.

January 9th. He only stayed there one day, but was delighted to welcome at his lecture "two men from Port Clarence, including the secretary." By way of Leeds he returned to Oxford.

The Durham tour did, in fact, take place from March 18 to 25, during which he talked to some 2,500 people at Darlington, Waterhouse, Durham, Dip-ton, Leadgate, Blackhill, and Newcastle. A salient point is that at Blackhill he arranged a conference of study-clubs, which, in view of co-ordination, was an invaluable plan. And the characteristic touch is that during this week of "incredible blizzards and deep snow" he would walk to find out his friends, at their work and in the pits.

The last Tyneside tour he was to make began on January 3, 1920, and lasted till the 14th. He began work at Blaydon, and on this first Sunday gave a short sermon at the 8 o'clock Mass, and preached at 11 to a congregation that "seemed to consist chiefly of men. Scores of them I had met before at the Gateshead Retreat House." In the afternoon he spoke on study-clubs for an hour to the League of the Cross, and in the evening for another hour on capital and labour. Monday he spent at Dunstone, a suburb of Gateshead, where there were 3,000 Catholics. The priest, he notes, has been here four years, and is lifting everything up. He lectured on the "Catholic Social Platform." At Hebburn on the 6th he lectured on the League of Nations, and on the 7th in the C.Y.M.S. rooms in the Cathedral parish of Newcastle. It was always a happiness to him to re-meet Father Pickering of Willington Quay, whither he went on Thursday, and the new war memorial there, a crucifix, elicited from him a horrible little anecdote which most priests, I dare say, could

parallel, but which goes to prove, as Father Plater held, that many—he said “the majority”—people in this country have not the slightest idea what Christianity means. When one such crucifix was being unveiled, a man exclaimed: “Why! there’s a bloke on it.” Those who took Christ from the eyes took him all too surely from the mind and heart.

On the 9th he started the tour of the Durham group of study-clubs. Leadgate was always a joy to him: “the Catholic men appear to run the public life of the town.” Thence to Stanley: a lecture, and a sermon on Sunday morning. After the sermon he drove the ten miles to Gateshead through the snow, which lay deep, and assisted at the “rally” of the diocesan C.Y.M.S. in the afternoon. There were some 250 men at it: he felt that this audience was good rather than great. I quote from the *Catholic Times* his frankly expressed views upon it.

“I knew them nearly all by sight and the bulk of them had made retreats. Some had come far and all were keen. But I added quite frankly that I did not think it a large one. For the annual ‘rally’ of the diocesan C.Y.M.S. it was disappointingly small. Yes, of course, the weather was bad, but after all a single parish could muster more than that in equally bad weather. And where was Newcastle itself? A great proportion of those present had come from along the Tyne; Hebburn had brought its splendid band. It was clear that, although parish organization is strong on Tyneside, the inter-parish organization leaves much to be desired. The men have not yet been shown the absolute necessity of united action. The C.Y.M.S. should number ten times its present membership and be the link binding Tyneside Catholicism into a mighty social force. One is amazed to find that it has not been taken up

in a number of parishes, where it is still regarded as a billiard club rather than as a crusade.

“But the procession of the Blessed Sacrament (men only) in the evening made up for the scantiness of the ‘rally.’ The 250 men who carried their candles and sang so lustily were an *élite* which could be trusted to act as a leaven. They would go back to their branches and stir them up. One could dream of a mass meeting next year in the town hall, at which all classes would be brought together and the Catenians rub shoulders with the Tyneside shipyard men and miners, and to which every parish would send its full quota.”

The Monday was more gently occupied : he went to an Art Gallery, and for the second time this tour, one is delighted to hear, to the other sort of pictures too.

On the Tuesday he went to York and examined two candidates for the C.W.L. diploma. He also held there an impromptu meeting, to which the Lord Mayor came, and at which, though not a Catholic, he presided. Next day he returned to Oxford.

Middlesbrough has been mentioned so often in connexion with the Tyneside tours that I may say here that Father Plater gave a mission there from which, I remember, he came back in ecstasies. It was in 1918, from March 23, eve of Palm Sunday, to the Tuesday in Easter week. Having said that on Palm Sunday he preached to St. Aloysius's Guild at 7.30 Mass, to children at 9.30 Mass, and again at 3, and to the congregation as a whole at 11 and once more at 6.30, and addressed the Men's Association at 8, any further description of this mission would be an anti-climax. During it he visited 276 families, some of them twice, wrote a variety of articles for the press, corrected C.S.G. examination papers, did all

the ordinary work of a mission, and inspected the Britannia Works (steel and shells) with the manager from 9 p.m. till midnight between Maundy Thursday and Good Friday. He started back by Stockton, Harrogate, and Wakefield, and made two visits to the enormous camps at Ripon, where the C.W.L. had a hut. The Richmond district is a very hilly one, and he talked and told yarns to the soldiers till very late; it may be because, as he notes with naive astonishment, that he "was very tired and seedy," that I can find little to say about this visit, which anyhow would belong properly to the chapter on military work. Miss Mahony, the energetic secretary of the Leeds C.W.L., has told me what a bad fright Father Plater's collapse on this occasion gave his hostesses, but this did not prevent his starting for Barrow-in-Furness on the 6th, missing the due amount of trains, encountering a crowd of youths in the coffee-room at Cranforth, and going with them, "all very cordial," to the pictures since there was no train till 11 p.m. The pictures were over at 10, so he put in the hour talking to a station foreman and to a military policeman, and arrived at Barrow at 2. He preached next day at Mass and in the evening, and lectured at 8. At this lecture no less than 425 copies of the Cardinal's pastoral were sold, 400 first C.S.G. textbooks, 48 *Manuals*, and 12 *Primers of Peace and War*. After a deal of inspecting houses and works, and the new town of 10,000 inhabitants, recently sprung up, called Vickerstown, he returned to Oxford on the 9th. Next Easter he again gave a mission at Middlesbrough.¹

¹ He spent a week there at Easter, 1917, but this visit, though filled with lectures and work in neighbouring camps, was not a mission.

Father Plater, on arriving at Oxford, found himself next door to Birmingham. He did not, however, go there, I think, till February 16, 1916, when he approached the Archbishop with a view of renting Begbroke House for the soldiers' retreats. The annual meeting of the retreat committee was held at Archbishop's House, and it was found that "we start 1916 with a clean sheet; no debts and no money." I shall not, of course, make a list of such visits, nor of those incidentally paid to his many good friends at Birmingham. They were most of them connected with the better organization of retreats. Nor need I relate in any detail his visits to Leamington. His hosts there can be sure that no other "house of call" proved at once so stimulating and so restful to him as did St. Peter's. Mr. Urquhart conferred on Charles Plater a better benefit and a more lasting one than perhaps he guessed when, long ago, he introduced him, at Dorchester, to Dr. William Barry. As for the actual retreats given at Wheeley's Road, and afterwards at Penryn and at Oscott, those are sufficiently enumerated elsewhere.

It was of course natural that he should also go to Birmingham for other purposes, such as to assist at the admirably organized Catholic reunions that occur there every year. He went from Oxford to one of these for the first time on January 30, 1917. Along with these would be mentioned the C.Y.M.S. conferences, which collected large numbers of men, for instance 700 on November 11 of that year, and nearly 2,000 at the Alexandra Theatre on November 10, 1916, and November 9, 1919. It was not till July 1918, however, that you see signs of Birmingham becoming a centre for "tours," however

fully he packed those other week-end or day's visits with lectures and sermons. On the 13th of that month, he moved about from Birmingham to Silverdale and Wednesbury. This, however, had no time to mature. Else, his work there was chiefly with the C.W.L., to whom he liked giving their days of "recollection," and on C.S.G. executive business, the neighbourhood of Oscott making it easy for the presence of Mgr. Parkinson to be ensured.

It remains that, to my mind, it is strange that Birmingham did not come to mean more for him—I mean, in the sense of concrete organized apostolate—than it did. He radiated from that city once or twice to Wolverhampton in one direction and Northampton in another, but nothing of this had taken as definite a shape as might easily have been expected. But he had the greatest belief in Birmingham and hoped that it would quite definitely become the Midland centre of retreats, as in fact it is even if Staffordshire should require a separate one. As it was, the fine co-operation of Father O'Keefe, then of Cannock, sent very large numbers of men to retreat at Birmingham from Cannock and Chasetown.

It was some time after his arrival at Oxford that he was able to revisit his friends in the north-west. On March 25, 1916, he went to Liverpool and lectured an hour after his arrival to a C.W.L. audience and later to a men's club; at each of these meetings three delegates were chosen in view of starting a Liverpool branch of the C.S.G. On the 26th he spoke to the large and very appreciative audience supplied to him by the Mount Pleasant Training School, and, after a variety of visits, to the Catholics in Liverpool University on the 27th. The next day held an hour's visit to the Arch-

bishop, who was most cordial and talked of the subjects nearest his heart—of the appalling poverty, of the impossibility of adequate home training. The children born of Catholic parents in Liverpool were, Father Plater learnt, one in three of the total number of births, but the children of school age were only one in four. The Archbishop was only all the more eager that the C.S.G. should be started at once, and suggested the name of a priest for chaplain. Father Plater found more pessimism than he had expected: the magnitude of the problems to be coped with took the heart out of the most apostolic even. But he ends this visit on the 30th feeling that “all promises well in spite of difficulties, or as well as can be expected.” He returned on Easter Tuesday and talked to 160 teachers—old students—gathered at Mount Pleasant for a retreat, and pleaded for intellectual interest in the Faith, expressing itself in study-clubs, and perhaps a magazine, which in fact have since then come into existence. He dreamed, meanwhile, of a “Teachers’ Page” in the *C.S.G. Bulletin*. A very brief visit from Rochdale on January 15, 1917, included a lecture, but seems to me remarkable for the fact that he had to wait “three hours” at Rock Ferry on his way home. How many missed trains can this possibly imply? A visit on December 5 lasted no longer, though he spoke to a “good audience” of the Catholic Society.

Incredible as it may seem, this is the last visit to Liverpool to which I can find any reference made.

But along with Liverpool goes, geographically, Preston. He was there from Monday, July 18, 1916, to the following Saturday, invigilating at the Oxford Local examinations, and compensated for tedium

of days thus spent by lecturing to audiences which contained some of those who, it may be remembered, had been the first to hear about his scheme for retreats. And it was from Preston that two of the first members of the Labour College were to come. In the July of the next year he was back again invigilating, and this time did much work directly in view of the C.S.G. conference it was proposed to hold there in October. At a meeting at the Catholic club on the 19th, at which about a hundred persons were present, including most of the representative clergy and laity of the town, the conference was enthusiastically decided on, and Father Plater left in the highest spirits. The conference did in fact come off in October and lasted from the 26th to the 28th. For the first time in the history of the C.S.G. it had a civic reception.

On April 14 of 1918 he was back again, and this time the points made were the election of a C.S.G. Preston Branch Committee, and the working out, in company with Dr. Mooney, of the idea of a summer school for the Catholic Teachers Union at Oxford. This has come nearest to realization, so far, in the second C.S.G. Summer School held there in 1921, when a large number of teachers were present. Since then many suggestions from teachers have added themselves, and there can be little doubt that development on these lines is called for. The last visit to Preston was July 1919, but nothing of special importance happened then.

With Liverpool and Preston can be grouped Blackpool—one is glad to see that circus and winter gardens were not omitted by Father Plater on his rare visits there—and Wigan, where he was, for example, on the Low Sunday of 1917 and in December ;

but apart from the fact that he was not there often, Wigan might almost as well be grouped in what one might call the Manchester circuit. It would have been natural that Father Plater should have gone to the great Catholic centre of St. Helens, and I am almost sure he went there, but at present I can find no record of a visit.

Such, then, was the way in which he would have formed a Liverpool district for his enterprise, though it will be seen at once how much less homogeneous it would have been than Tyneside. Preston was to him so important, and had such a special place in his history, that he could never have just grouped it with any other place.

Manchester, of course, was another centre from which he would have radiated to this side and to that, had he had time to accomplish the obvious destiny of these tours. On July 3, 1916, he went there for the first time after he became Rector at Oxford. He found there at this time a great ally in Sir Daniel McCabe, whom he saw chiefly about organizing soldiers' retreats at Oakwood Hall. In October he was back again for the C.T.S. Conference, but I do not think any special work was done, and exactly a year later he returned for a lecture, but somehow seems to have been disappointed. He made up for it in January 1919, when he had an excellent meeting there, chaired by Sir Daniel McCabe, in the Holy Name hall. What made this visit far more important than any hitherto was, however, a small assembly at Bishop's House, when some very divergent views as to the attitude of the Guild towards Socialism were discussed. This meeting exercised the opposite effect on him from what might have been expected, if we consider his definite dislike for

all discussion that seemed to imply dissension. For he left Manchester two days later, quite happy despite the "gloomy outlook" which he had to confess lay before the Guild, financially speaking, at the moment. But Father Plater always rose, after the briefest interval, to meet difficulties. He regarded them as things to be overcome, and would come back to Oxford filled with a curious mixture of glee and panic. The more serious the scrape, the more he determined to laugh while he was in it.

I suppose that Manchester is so vast that it cannot but be regarded as the centre point of the group of towns that are near it; yet I do not doubt that Father Plater's affection went in a particular way to Rochdale, not far off, and remained there. The Rochdale men used to come and see him practically wherever he might be in that neighbourhood, and this accounts, perhaps, for my finding few records only of actual visits there. However, he spent the week-end of January 13 to 15, 1917, there, devoting it to the usual occupations and "escorted all the time by the faithful study-club." He always ends his references to Rochdale with a sentence like "It has been a charming visit to these keen boys. They have really done fine work and the whole tone and spirit of it is so fine." He was back for a brief space in April, and again exactly a year afterwards, when he lectured under the auspices of the W.E.A., and on Saturday, October 16, 1918, spoke at the Hippodrome on the League of Nations to 700 people, with the Mayor in the chair and Lord Parmoor for his fellow-speaker. At 7 in the same evening he lectured to the Co-operative Society in their fine hall on International Morality, and on the Law of Nations next afternoon, and on the Restoration of

the Law of Nations that same night. One can see how much he valued creating a massive simultaneous effect on public opinion by dealing with identical or closely allied subjects before different audiences in the same locality. This, I think, was the last visit to this town. Accrington and Burnley and a few other places he revisited once or twice, but the really new ground broken was at Bolton, and in quite a new way.

The enterprise of Father C. Chronnell brought him there on September 13, 1919, to give a course of lectures at the Spinners' Hall to a general audience. He began by propounding with the utmost simplicity those Catholic principles which, when reasonably and coherently set forth, vindicate the approbation of all right-minded men, for after all they are based on the most common-sense philosophy of God and of human nature. He came to quite close quarters with the problems of property and housing, of divorce and of education, of rent and of birth control, and he had the robust good sense of the audience with him all the time. Not but what he was vigorously questioned; but so honest was the questioning that it could not be called heckling, though even hecklings he enjoyed. Speakers of all denominations and shades of political view were there and many spoke, and I should not wonder whether these friendly conferences did not do more for practical healing of misunderstandings than any amount of much more learned writing. It was shown that men were after all seeking the same thing, and principles were displayed without which it was impossible even to make a move in the right direction, or indeed in any direction save to chaos. The local press was extremely friendly, and its very substantial criti-

cisms were acknowledged and spoken to by Father Plater in each succeeding lecture.

On the whole Father Plater had little to do with the West of England, which is, I think, rather unjustly compared with other parts, to its disadvantage, as regards Catholic enterprise. But Father Plater was all the while acquiring a greater esteem for a splendid material there, and I think that Bristol—whither, after all, his duties as rector of a “college,” which included a house there, regularly sent him—Cardiff, and Newport might have come to be fixed points in yet another yearly tour. I cannot now see that he went to Bristol before April 15, 1916, when he lunched next day with Canon Lee and the clergy of the pro-Cathedral to meet the Bishop, and afterwards lectured on the C.S.G. in the schools.

In 1917 he did not, as far as I can see, go there at all, but on February 24, 1918, he preached at Grange-town, Cardiff, and lectured next day at the Park Hotel to some 500 people on Christian Social Reconstruction, and to another 500 on Tuesday at Bristol, when the Bishop, he notes, said that he wanted the C.S.G. in every parish. On this visit he was preoccupied, of course, with making known the Cardinal's pastoral on the social situation. Bath and Bournemouth on May 2 and 3 took him in the same direction, and once in a way he stopped at Worcester, but chiefly on business connected with the Jesuit house there. I think that had this sphere of action become familiar to him, he would have interested himself in that work for Catholic seamen which is dear to the heart of the present Archbishop. I find, in Father Plater's correspondence, towards the end, signs that he who had given his heart so

fully to soldiers, and whose first mission had been to bluejackets, was feeling a definite distress that sailors had so little done for them. And I recall that it was in their company that his life ended. Those who now propose to work among them, or for them, may be sure of the very special prayers of Father Plater for their success. He made one or two visits to Portsmouth, but I cannot see that it was this particular line of work that took him there.

I wish Father Plater had been far oftener to Cannock. Poor Arnold Bennett ! Poor, that is to say, if he really thinks that his books give an adequate picture of the Five Towns ! Perhaps he doesn't. But I suppose his readers do, and their notion of the Potteries is, in consequence, as wrong as can be. But I imagine Mr. Arnold Bennett does think so himself ; if he does, it only proves once more how very unreal are the realists, and how the man of the world sees less than anyone of it. I presume that even an enclosed nun would see—somehow—more of what Father Plater saw in the Potteries than ever Mr. Arnold Bennett would. All the true innermost is what he saw ; and that was beautiful, and enabled him to speak always of Cannock with an affection that even Rochdale did not surpass. But let us leave comparisons, and say that Father Plater was always in ecstasies over the fervour of the mining and manufacturing population of those grim Staffordshire towns, and I do not wonder. The organization of Cannock was, too, so novel and so perfect. The concert hall, and the theatre ; the singing at Mass and Vespers ; above all, the Christian community of good-will. Would that I had space for many details. I can but say that after his visit from March 27, 1917, to the 30th, it was clear that he would have

loved a yearly tour here, too. Cannock, moreover, gave him the chance of visiting Hawkesyard, where Father Vincent McNabb was usually to be found. The priests walked together over the 400 acres of estate belonging to the Priory, and dreamed dreams. Father McNabb wished that some day the beautiful place might be used for the poor; Catholic institutions were to settle there, chaplained by the friars: religious orders owed a debt to the soil; they had, perhaps, forgotten it. Father Plater longed to see a council of religious orders at Oxford, some summer, that should form wide schemes of co-operation in some such social effort. They knelt together on the hill-top and prayed for this.

Finally, there was the group of Leeds, where he went on April 13, 1918, and began as so often by learning the facts about the district by means of sheer inspection under the wise guidance of the local clergy. This time he was appalled. Housing, especially, was in a dreadful condition. More children, he was told—and this sort of comparison always moved him—died in the district than men were killed by the war from the district. That may not be exceptional. But it does prove that the conditions of Peace may be worse assassins than any war. On the 21st he was at Keighley, and thence he went, by way of violent contrast, you might have thought, to Harrogate. But not at all; for what he saw in Harrogate was not the splendour of its super-hotels, but its slums, which are as bad as those of Leeds. Thence to York and Bradford; and when you find him saying that he “must” put in a week at Leeds you foresee at once that this might well have been another group of towns for a regular apostolate.

I need but mention a "Glasgow tour," as he in fact calls it, from April 1, 1919, to the 8th, because it was never repeated and I never heard him express any clear wish to work in Scotland. There may have been more than one reason for this; but I think he was conscious that he ought to set some kind of limit to his hopes, and indeed, when he went there this time he was already feeling very ill. However, he lectured on the 2nd to 600 people in St. Mungo's Hall, and to 200 students in the Dowanhill Training College—a Glasgow Mount Pleasant—and again that night at Springbourne under the auspices of the new "Irish Labour Party." The men, he underlines, are keen on the C.S.G., and are subscribing to the fund.

Besides other lectures, he visited the University and Mr. O'Callaghan, to whom the Knights of St. Columba now owe so much of their success. He was much impressed by Dr. Flood's study circle in the Sacred Heart parish.

Such, then, was this part of Father Plater's apostolate. May he have bequeathed his spirit to his successors. May there be many who think, as he thought, in terms of the whole nation. When the soldiers left Oxford, he told me that I must resign myself to "line-fishing"; that I must try to be of service henceforward to individuals rather than large groups; and from the way he spoke I saw that he sympathized with the desire that a man might feel for a wide area of action and for a work that should affect masses of men, the mind of the community. This was undoubtedly his vocation; though he was able so wonderfully to love and labour for the separate souls of each. Few have thus com-

bined the line-work with the net-work. It was the latter, however, which, I feel sure, was of unique service to the Catholic Church in this country. On a very wide scale he was providing principles of life to a race which has lost them, or possesses them only in a very confused form. The land cannot live off that ; and if there is to be a national spiritual life, it cannot be by way of the evangelization of individuals alone that such a life may be maintained, revived, or re-created. These tours of Father Plater's did succeed in putting before large masses the ultimate principles of life, and preparing the excellent soil of human nature for receiving more definite instruction in the full revelation of Christ.¹

¹ In this chapter especially I feel I may have made, if not many mistakes, at least many omissions. If I have, they were not made purposely ; and let me be taken as saying that Father Plater did all this, not that this was all he did.

Chapter XIII

THE CATHOLIC SOCIAL GUILD

"My people have forgotten Me days without number. . . . Also in thy skirts is found the blood of the innocent poor."

"If I say: I will not make mention of Him, nor speak any more in His name, then there is in my heart as it were a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I am weary with forbearing, and I cannot."

"He judged the cause of the poor and needy; then it was well. Was not this to know Me? saith the Lord."—JEREMIAS ii. 34; xx. 9; xxii. 16.

IT has already been said that this book is not to include a history of the Catholic Social Guild. Yet in so far as the Guild was an expression of Father Plater's spirit, its own spirit ought to be made as clear as possible to readers; and since work on behalf of the Guild occupied a large part of Father Plater's time and energy, some description of that ought to be given too. But if I were to make a mere accurate chronicle of his doings in connexion with it, I should be very tedious, and the wood invisible for the crowding of its trees. I think, then, I can scarcely do otherwise than sum up at this point, as briefly as I can, what the Guild became during Father Plater's life, and it will be far better to relate that as a whole, than to divide it even into what it was before and after he returned to Oxford. All the way through it must be remembered that I never claim that Father Plater was alone in beginning or in building up the Guild. It was not even the exclusive work of Father Plater and his special group of friends. The Guild was wanted on a very wide scale by very many; and it is really the quiet labour of little study-clubs, done by hundreds of men whose names the public will never know; it

is the modest study of schoolboys, schoolgirls, seminarians, and the noble co-operation of already overworked priests that are keeping the Guild alive and developing it.

It will be remembered that Father Plater began by seeing a great need of work to be done, and a great deal of work that was actually being done, and that he forthwith wanted to do a great deal more work. It will also be recalled that he soon reached the very modest conclusion that people did not know enough about the work to be done, or why or how to do it. This conviction germinated in his brain until he conceived the idea of a League of Social Study. It was definitely as such that the new organization was launched at Manchester, and as such it was spoken and written about by him. The main speech made at Manchester was reprinted by the C.T.S. under the title *Catholics and Social Study*; and the *Month* for November 1909, while noting that the name of the new society "does not appear to have been as yet definitely settled," describes it simply, in an article by Father Plater, as "A Catholic Society for Social Study." As such, too, it was accepted and welcomed by men and women of all vocations in life: I quote from a characteristic letter mentioned by Father Plater himself as expressing just what he wanted to hear expressed. It is from a working-man, which adds to its value as evidence:

"I welcome, as I feel many Catholic working-men will welcome, this scheme of stimulating Catholic interest in social reform. . . . The average worker goes to church on Sunday, and does what he considers all that can be reasonably expected of him. The idea that the doctrines of his Church can be applied to his every-day life is entirely lost sight of. . . . There is no doubt, and I know it from

experience, that Catholic working-men become easy converts to the Socialistic creed and invariably end by leaving the Church altogether. This absorbing topic is discussed at our Trade Union meetings and in our workshops and we have it thrust upon us at every street corner. . . . In order to combat this we must have an effective alternative policy. . . . We gladly welcome a proper system of concerted study in these matters."

"This and similar letters," Father Plater added, "might be quoted to show not only that Catholic working-men will be ready to make use of the society, but that they are frequently capable of expressing themselves with exactness, good sense, and point, and only need a 'proper system of concerted study' in order to make them standard-bearers of Catholic social reform."

He then, after describing in his *Month* article pamphlets which should be of service in study-clubs, quotes at some length from Mr. Bernard Shaw's reminiscences, in a way that makes clear how large study-clubs bulked in his mind, and how certain he was alike of their necessity and of the difficulties involved in them.

"It is not enough," Father Plater commented, "for Catholic working-men to listen in more or less stolid passivity to other people's lectures. They must train themselves to lecture. Otherwise how can we possibly expect them to be alert in the defence of Catholic principles? How can we expect them to be even moderately interested in the Catholic position? Their apprehension will at most be notional and not real, until we set their faculties of thought and speech to work. The results may be clumsy and halting at first; but assiduous practice will work wonders and set us dreaming of a Catholic Ruskin Hall."

The Labour College has, then, already dawned

upon him. He goes on to demand more knowledge of what is being done abroad, and ends by devising systems for circulating books and supplying information. Only the *tuitional* element, destined to be so important in the C.S.G., does not appear yet.

How clear was Charles Plater's vision from the outset, is seen, then, by the fact that almost all that the C.S.G. was to come to attempt was in his mind from quite the beginning and underwent very little modification.

He proceeded to describe the *Almanach* of the *Action Populaire*, and offered the contents of a possible English book on similar lines. It is true that he does not seem explicitly to allude here to a *Year-book*; but since the *Almanach* itself was a yearly publication, it would seem certain that he would not have been satisfied even then with anything less. He then asked for lists of books suited for various *classes* of students—girls' schools, boys' clubs, working-men's circles, and so forth.

It is remarkable to find that the Guild could indeed bring out its own first *Year-book* as early as 1910. In it, as far as I can see, the name of Charles Plater does not occur at all. This was partly due to tact, for, after all, he was not yet, it will be remembered, a priest, and partly to a quite definite desire to avoid identifying what he wished to be a matter of general interest, with himself. The book naturally emphasized at the very outset the existence of a "Social Problem," and the imperative duty, laid upon all Catholics who professed to have a complete philosophy of life, to share in its solution. The structure of the new Guild was outlined and its work foreshadowed. That work lay, of course, wholly in the future, but the fields to be occupied

were very successfully mapped out. Existing Catholic organizations were indicated, from the point of view of their social utility, and a little survey of the general social progress achieved in 1909 was made. This was a feature destined to great development.

The *Year-book* for 1911 marks an immense leap forward. By November 1, 1910, the membership stood at 269; two branches had been established, at Birmingham and at Chelmsford; fifteen societies had affiliated themselves to it. In Montreal a Catholic Social Study Club had been formed on the lines of the C.S.G., and foreign countries were evincing that interest in its existence and activities which they are apt to show in Catholic English efforts almost more readily than Englishmen seem willing to do in their own home products. A delegate from the *Action Populaire* had, in fact, been sent, it will be remembered, to the Catholic Congress at Leeds.

But the Guild had already been able to produce; and its productions were the more generally useful because they aimed rather at helping Catholics to do good work than at doing it all for them. Thus, twenty-two lists of useful books had been compiled and circulated; a number of penny pamphlets, dealing with Catholic principles, and recording the utterances of Popes Leo XIII and Pius X, had been published; book-boxes had been arranged, which went round to the various interested groups, so that literature, which such groups might be too poor to buy, might yet be accessible to them. The groups to which these went were already taking the form of study-clubs, and at these and elsewhere a good number of lectures were being regularly given. The congress at Leeds had, meanwhile, given the right

sort of publicity to the Guild. And at that congress the momentous decision had been arrived at to lower the entrance fee to 1s. from an original 2s. 6d., so that a much larger increase in membership might be foreseen, drawn from those precisely whom the Guild was so particularly anxious to include in its ranks, and who were far from able to afford large contributions. I may add that it was at Leeds that Father Plater first met Mr. Henry Somerville, who was to do such good work on the Guild's behalf. Mr. Somerville had had a very wide experience of social conditions in various ways at home and in Canada. He had been on the staff of the *Manchester Guardian*, and associate editor of the *Toronto Catholic Register*, and was subsequently professor of sociology at the University of Antigonish. He further obtained his diploma in economics at Ruskin College, Oxford, and is now organizing secretary of the C.S.G., a post which he first occupied in 1919. At Leeds Father Plater and he did not see much of each other, but Mr. Somerville sent him reports of the study circle in which he was himself interested, and they met again next year at the Newcastle congress. It would be unbecoming on my part were I to dwell on the great qualities of Mr. Somerville, or on the services rendered by him; I shall be forgiven if I do no more than thus put on record the invaluable help and sympathy Father Plater derived from him during so many years.

The *Year-book* for 1912 could by now assume the principles of the Guild to be sufficiently well known, and could attend more to what was being done. It endeavoured to "give as complete account as possible of the work of the various Catholic organizations which touched social questions either of set design

or incidentally." At the same time, the *Year-book* still referred to the C.T.S. *Handbook of Catholic Charitable and Social Works* for the more explicitly religious societies and their work, or the "purely parochial enterprises which entered into the normal duties of the clergy." During the year the Guild had obtained leave to publish a cheap edition of Mr. C. S. Devas' *Political Economy*, while the series of penny pamphlets had been much amplified, and two more serious manuals, on *Destitution* and *Sweated Labour* respectively, had made a beginning of a series to be called *Catholic Studies in Social Reform*. A study scheme had been elaborated, but was still in its preliminary stage of application; the book-boxes were popular and new books in some quantities had been added to their stock, and visitors from the States, Hungary, France, and Ireland had made a point of attending the Guild's meetings at the Newcastle congress. Membership had risen to 504; two new branches had been established, and thirty-six societies were affiliated. Exactly a hundred towns were represented in the membership of the Guild. Moreover, 1911 had witnessed the creation of its *Quarterly Bulletin*, an invaluable little publication which was more and more needed by those who did not wish to wait for the *Year-book*, but needed a briefer and businesslike production which should keep them advised of progress or of dangers. But to my mind the most striking feature of the new *Year-book* is the attention it gives to non-Catholic social groups or institutions, foreshadowing the time when opinion could be definitely formed as to how far co-operation was possible or desirable. Hitherto the eyes of the Guild had been turned almost exclusively to the equipment of its own

members and the development among Catholics themselves of the social sense : now it began to seem possible to apply the Catholic influence, once the abstract principles were firmly grasped by all, to a wider and indeed national area.

It is really this that is insisted on in the Introduction by the Rt. Rev. F. W. Keating, then Bishop of Northampton, now Archbishop of Liverpool. The object of the Guild, he said, was "to promote and guide the Catholic movement" as well as to act as its "brain." This Introduction, though short, is so important, even in view of future controversies, as to merit special attention even after all these years. The Bishop did, in fact, follow up this hint by his address on March 20, 1912, and in the Sodality Hall of the Mount Street Church, London. He deliberately traced a constructive programme of Catholic social reform, dwelling on six topics which exacted Catholic attention : the living wage, housing, mutual help, poor-law reform, child hygiene, and fuller education. Cardinal Bourne, who presided, warned his audience against dismissing as "Socialism" all proposals for social reform, and equally against using, for such reform, principles that no Catholic should admit. Meanwhile, he stressed the duty of all Catholics to lend their instructed aid, "throughout the country, in every party to which Catholics can legitimately belong." This line of direction had, too, a great and lasting importance.

At the same time it remained, and always has remained, clear that the Guild committed itself only to principles, and not to detailed politics. Individual members might believe in this or that as the best application of the principles ; but this was not to commit the Guild as such. Father

Plater made this evident both in printed and in private letters—he had not two doctrines—from one of which I quote a paragraph :

“ We can all combine in the Guild because the Guild does not associate itself with any one of the various policies open to Catholics . . . but leaves members free to select which they will. When Catholics try to force the hand of the Church and make her define or condemn when she does not want to—what are we to do ? Surely not to bludgeon them, but to educate them. . . . We shall need endless tact and patience and willingness to work with others who do not share our opinions. . . . I am so keen to make our committees representative even though they might seem thereby to be less compact and efficient. It would be a calamity for the Guild for men like X to find themselves unable to work with us ; though I admit that they must find such work tedious and even galling at times. As for yourself, you are a pillar of the Guild, which is something more than being a brick.”

At the Norwich congress the Guild placed before itself, as its aim, the facilitation of intercourse between Catholic students and workers, assistance in working out the application of Catholic principles to actual social conditions, and the creation of a wider interest among Catholics in social questions and the securing of co-operation in promoting social reform on Catholic lines. The means to be adopted in obtaining these objects were still in the first place the promotion of “ concerted and systematic study,” the production of and circulation of literature dealing with social subjects, the training and provision of lecturers, and co-operation with local social effort.

Dr. Whiteside, the late Archbishop of Liverpool, wrote an Introduction to the 1913 Year-book, and

his encouragement—he declared that the Guild had not come a moment too soon and reaffirmed the teaching of the Popes themselves, that all Catholics without exception ought to take an intelligent interest in the social question and to co-operate in its solution—was all the more valuable when it is remembered how far he was from being at the mercy of rash ideas or willing to admit any but well thought out and trustworthy methods. He saw clearly that England could not rock herself in the illusion that she would be exempt from the troubles that tormented the Continental labour world; that so large a proportion of English Catholics belonged to the labouring classes that it must needs be through social topics that the Church in this country should impress upon her surroundings that she possessed the divine mission she so boldly claimed, and that it was only through the study of eternal Catholic principles that her members could hope to do this. Therefore he threw all his weight on to the side of the formation of study-clubs in which Catholics should use, and through which they should then learn to apply, the literature that the Guild must proceed to provide.

During 1912 the Guild had, in fact, produced Volumes III and IV of its *Catholic Studies in Social Reform*, namely, examinations of the housing problem and of the Catholic doctrine concerning eugenics, several new penny pamphlets, and some four-page pamphlets, a new departure. Its book-box system had been developed; and a lending library, housed at first on the premises of the Catholic library near Farm Street, had been transferred to the Guild's offices, themselves a new creation, and situated in a third-floor room at 4 Tavistock Square, the home of

the British Institute of Social Service. It is pleasant to recall these instances of reciprocal good-will and practical assistance.

What was, however, a massive piece of work belonging to this year, was the definite scheme of social study, which, organized in the autumn of 1911, was formally opened in that of 1912. Three separate study subjects were assigned: economic theory; social and industrial history; and some social problems of the day. Each had an elementary and an advanced course of one year's duration, for which syllabuses were carefully prepared. By a system of preliminary courses it had been ascertained that a sufficient number of students would embark upon the regular courses, and the institution of examinations with the stimulus of passes, certificates, and diplomas gave permanence and proper shape to a scheme which is of extremely high value to any school, even for such as do not contemplate sending their members up for diplomas in economics and social sciences at, for example, the London University.

Bishop Keating again wrote an Introduction to the *Year-book* when it appeared in 1914. When we recall what was to happen in that year his words seem quite terribly to the point. He sees that during the past year the true social interests of the peoples have been sacrificed to party politics; he hears the word "revolution" recklessly tossed about "by many who will be the first victims of revolution, if revolution comes." The Guild repudiated party politics as unreservedly as it did revolution. Its object was to educate on the only lines which should be adequately constructive. It had succeeded beyond the most sanguine hopes and was being imi-

tated. Neither the capitalists nor the proletariat were altogether impervious to Catholic effort. "We may yet save the situation by availing ourselves of intervals of mutual exhaustion to instil into the ears of the combatants the serene teachings of Catholic truth and the pleadings of Catholic brotherhood. The banishment of Christ has wrought the ruin of our age. Only His restoration will save it. That is the sum of our politics." We can imagine the despair of all who were thus convinced of the only way of salvation for the peoples, whatever their nationality might be, when the war came to destroy three-quarters of the good work which, within all the evil, was in all countries, equally, going forward. The reviews of Continental and American work which the *Year-books* continued to relate proved that amply.

Within England, perhaps the increase in the number of study-clubs was most remarkable. From 27, with a membership of some 300 or 400, they had become about 100, with a membership of some 1,500. This did not take into account those which existed in practically all seminaries, nor the clubs or classes which were springing up in colleges or schools. This was no doubt greatly due to the personal work which during this year Father Plater was doing in the North, but also to the vigorous support which bodies like the C.Y.M.S. and the S.S.V.P. had begun to give. The retreats, too, were producing their effect, which was to inspire courage and to spiritualize, and thereby immensely to reinforce, the motives of Catholic workers.

During the year the Guild had to decide to leave Tavistock Square, whence the B.I.S.S. was itself emigrating. It went to premises which were,

in fact, far from comfortable in the basement of No. 1 Victoria Street, S.W.; this was, however, more central than Bloomsbury, and the new home was never meant to be permanent. I will not now give the names of more than the most important of the Guild's yearly publications, and so I shall choose from among much literature proper to the year which had just finished, only Mgr. Parkinson's *Primer of Social Science*, which became on the spot a textbook in the great majority of study-clubs. The more systematized method of social study had found the demand for book-boxes develop more slowly than might have been expected—clubs, in proportion as they took their work seriously, managed to buy the books they needed—but not only were the papers sent in for examination in pursuance of the study scheme quite remarkably satisfactory, but a plan of correspondence tuition had been inaugurated, and also a study course for younger students in boys' colleges and convent schools.

The Guild was by now being invited abroad, and its hon. secretary represented it at the international conference convened by the *Ligues Sociales d'Ache-teurs* at Antwerp. At home its members not only read papers at most of the big Catholic conferences, but came forward on non-Catholic platforms to put the Catholic ideal before new audiences. Thus, Mgr. Parkinson spoke at the national anti-sweating demonstration at the Queen's Hall in London, and Miss Fortey read a paper at the central poor-law conference at the London Guildhall. Mgr. Parkinson and others took part in meetings of the council of Christian witness, itself an outcome of the Interdenominational Conference.

Probably, however, the best public recognition

of the Guild was the invitation made to it by the Plymouth Catholic Congress that it should organize the Saturday afternoon mass meeting. It filled the Guildhall, the largest hall in Plymouth, with an audience which listened attentively to the discussion of the chosen topic—the Catholic demand for a living wage. Two short speeches, described as very touching in their entire simplicity and directness, were made by representatives of sweated industries, a bootmaker and a matchbox-maker, who with two other workers were present on the platform through the instrumentality of the Anti-Sweating League, which had helped the Guild to get the meeting together. Reports of this meeting brought the Guild into friendly relations with the Christian Labour Syndicates of Cologne. It will at once be seen how much the events of 1914 nipped in the bud.

1914 itself began well; perhaps Father Wright's *Christian Citizenship* was the most noticeable publication, because it served admirably as a new textbook for study-clubs. Even in spite of the war, new study-clubs kept springing into existence, despite the collapse of some of those whose members were all, or most of them, called to the Army. But the Guild was thriving remarkably well in Scotland, and, it might at first seem strange, was exercising a real influence in New Zealand. This was due to the keen interest displayed in it by the editor of the *New Zealand Tablet*, Mr. Scott. What had, however, an importance of its own, was the Cardiff congress, because so great had been the organizing success of the Guild at Plymouth that it was asked, by a happy innovation, to arrange a mass meeting for the Saturday night, which had always so far been kept empty, entirely for working-men. The

subject chosen was "The Church and the Worker"; and, as the *Year-book* modestly says, "the Guild may at least claim to have been the mouthpiece through which the urgent industrial problems of our time have found due expression at our Catholic congresses."

In a sense the annual meeting of the Guild, which took place on the Monday, was still more important, for on it the attitude of the Guild to Socialism was defined. The Guild had by now itself achieved sufficient importance to be criticized and indeed combated, not always in the most chivalrous manner, and a certain *apologia* was not uncalled for.

It may perhaps be best to take this opportunity to make the Guild's position quite clear on this matter, always without entering into any controversy for which I am not competent. I will first summarize Mgr. Parkinson's speech made on the Monday at the C.S.G. annual meeting at Cardiff.

He began by recalling the history and scope of the Guild, on which we need not dwell again. The Guild studied Catholic social principles, and hoped to apply them to actual problems.

"On some points," he said, "there may have been differences of opinion, such as with regard to the old-age pensions . . . the Insurance Act, the limit of 'nationalization,' and so forth; but there has been no indecision either on the platform or in the press as to the attitude of the C.S.G. in reference to the need of a social change, the inviolability of private ownership both in goods and land, the demand of a living wage, the support of the trade union principle, the necessity of factory legislation, the raising of the status of the working-class, the claims of small-holders, peasant proprietors, and agricultural labourers, the need of better housing in town and country,

the abuses of the capitalist system, the evils incident to the possession of extremely large estates (*latifundia*). In all these matters we have followed the letter and the spirit of Papal documents, or the example of the Roman Pontiffs themselves."

He proceeded to catalogue some important points on which the Guild had not yet spoken, such as unearned increment, compulsory sale, rate of interest, and so on. This was because further research would have been needed, or authoritative guidance added, or a suitable occasion found.

"On one point, however, the attitude of the Guild must have appeared to every attentive and unbiassed observer as definite and decided: I refer to the question of Socialism. There are, it is true, many things in Socialism which are the common property of mankind and not distinctively Socialism; but among the ever-changing aspects which the description of Socialism assumes among its adherents, certain features stand out in unmistakable clearness as essential characters under a Protean form.

"1. Socialism claims to be either independent of religion or else its own religion.

"2. It looks for the practical expropriation of practically all the privately owned means of production, with or without compensation.

"3. Collectivism means the regulation of the entire social fabric by parliamentary action.

"4. Syndicalism means the control of industry, and of the entire social body, by the industrial workers.

"5. Guild Socialism declares the immorality of wages, as such.

"6. Agrarian Socialism stands for the abolition of rent, and for compulsory expropriation of landowners by taxation, sale, or otherwise.

“To each and all of these systems or doctrines, as understood by their respective promoters and in their common and obvious meaning of the terms employed, the C.S.G. has always been solidly and on Catholic principles in total and unqualified opposition.

“Then why has not the C.S.G. made this declaration before? Because there is not a Socialist of any party in the English-speaking world who in his waking moments could say that the C.S.G. is a Socialist organization or even Socialistic in the sense in which any intelligent Socialist understands those ambiguous terms. In our *Bulletin* and other publications we have constantly shown the incompatibility of Socialism (and other non-Catholic varieties of social reform) with Catholic principles. We have not attacked the Socialist professedly, because our main purpose has been constructive; because we have recognized that Socialism is a chameleon, and that Socialists of to-day had refuted and discarded the Socialists of the past, and because what is really needed is a book to convince the leaders of the Socialist Party, and such a production is not to be lightly undertaken.

“Between the C.S.G. and Socialism, therefore, any alliance is impossible, and this for many fundamental and primary reasons.

“Theism (with all its implications) and revealed religion (in its fullness) as found in the Catholic Church are essential and dominating factors in our plan of reform. Such a position is the direct contrary of Socialism.

“Religion, and the Catholic religion in particular, is for us the principal instrument in social reform. This is not the Socialist view.

“Socialism makes for the levelling and destruction of classes. In accordance with the teaching of the Catholic Church we have no such purpose.

“Socialism . . . is always either rationalistic, or independent, or guided by private judgment. The C.S.G. freely and deliberately accepts and acts up to the principle of submission to the authority of the Bishop of the diocese

and the Holy See. . . . No Socialist could or would endorse an admission of this nature.

“Private property is with us an immutable right, and not merely a right of some vague kind, but a personal and natural right. I take it that no Socialist could admit this.

“Catholics stand for charity as well as justice.

“If, then, we are asked our attitude towards Socialism (as it is universally understood) we reply that our attitude is completely incompatible with all its fundamental doctrines.

“If we are further asked whether we believe that Socialism is ‘patient of a Catholic interpretation’ our reply is that we do not consider that any *genuine* Socialism is ‘patient’ of a Catholic interpretation, any more than we consider that black is ‘patient’ of being described as white.”

Mgr. Parkinson’s speech was followed by one from Cardinal Gasquet, who dwelt on the pre-Reformation state of things, and contrasted the bad individualism that the religious upheaval had introduced. The C.S.G., he said, while making it absolutely clear that it did not stand for Socialism, made it no less clear that it was striving to restore the fraternity of man as it had existed when Catholic principles dominated in society. Bishop McIntyre, now Archbishop of Birmingham, insisted that the social crisis had arisen, as Cardinal Gasquet had urged, since the Reformation, and that Catholics were “rather badly equipped for dealing with it.” The generosity of the Catholic spirit had not made the social problem as acute among Catholics as it was in the nation at large. But as things were, vast problems did exist, because while there were “two very clear points there is a vast nebulous region in which voices are discordant. . . . The two points which are

absolutely clear are these : First, every man has a right to his own possessions ; and secondly, when men live in community those private goods are subservient to the common good." As long as Catholic generosity governed minds there was no problem about how or when the State could take what had been considered private possessions. But now

" there is a vast field which, I must honestly confess, is very dark. No one yet has determined satisfactorily to me how far the community can go in impinging on the rights of private property. . . . I am looking to the C.S.G. to determine these obscure points in the light of clear and assured Catholic principles. To a certain extent it is a matter where our writers—because there was no need—did not go into the matter perfectly, and the C.S.G. is now developing Catholic principles in order to determine the respective rights of the individual and the claims of the State. . . . We are all more or less under a fog, and when the C.S.G. has cleared away the fog we shall find that those who have been antagonists are walking arm in arm."

I judge that the " loud applause " that followed the speeches of Cardinal and Bishop were not conventional, nor merely the expression of public opinion as to the character of the Guild on which these two dignitaries had passed so high an encomium, but a very right outburst of gratitude on the part of the Guild itself. For it had been made quite clear that the Guild was trusted, as, indeed, it always had been, both in England and at Rome. Mgr. Parkinson had, moreover, been thrust by the exigencies of the situation into the ungrateful position of one who has to insist upon antagonisms. He had to say what made it seem that the Guild was " in opposition " mainly ; existed to combat something

else ; was unable to do anything positive or indeed anything save rehearse again and again what everyone already knew. It had now, by the two speeches which for that very reason I recalled, been made as clear as noonday that authority expected of the Guild that *constructive* intellectual work which implies that all is not as it should be ; that complete knowledge has not yet been reached ; that principles can be put yet more accurately, and above all, their application more courageously insisted on. This application might involve particular consequences very distasteful to individuals, and provoke violent recrimination, and even attack, overt or covert. But it was asked that the Guild, strong in the knowledge of its recognized orthodoxy, should not hesitate to do its duty by the State and the Church alike. The upshot, then, of this congress was to leave the Guild in a much stronger position than it had so far occupied. Its attitude was recognized as correct, and its line of advance was sanctioned.

The curious thing is that the attacks that the Guild had to sustain came from both sides, which in itself is a strong argument that it kept to that line of truth and right which is always so annoying to extremists. Such is noticeably an effect of the balanced decisions of the Church herself. I shall be hurting no one's feelings if I say that in Glasgow and in Dublin there were many who did not think that the Guild went nearly far enough. I do not say that this idea was confined to those two cities, and most certainly not that everyone in those two cities thought this. But that is where Father Plater whose "Life" this is, came across that kind of criticism chiefly. It started from the conviction that

action was necessary on the part of Catholics here and now ; that the Guild talked, and did nothing ; that it unendingly studied “ principles,” and harped upon that word till people were tired of it, and began to wonder when on earth such principles would be seen applied by those who preconized them. And the application desired by some of these critics went beyond what the C.S.G. was prepared so far to admit as ascertainably justified. There were those, for example, who asked for a condemnation of the wage system as such, and the official advocacy of the distributive state. The C.S.G. quite frankly admitted that it was primarily a society of study. Study was no good unless it issued into practical reforms, that was clear. But it did not feel that this reform or that, urged by its critics, was as yet certainly the right one. If individual members of the Guild thought it was, that must not be taken to bind the Guild. In this the Guild was undoubtedly right. It would be fatal if the Church, whose mind the Guild strove to interpret, appeared committed to specific ideas which were in reality those only of a group. For my part, then, I feel no duty of adverse criticism, in either direction. I do not, most certainly, say that the reforms advocated by the two groups with which the Guild here found itself at variance were wrong, but I think I can safely say that the Guild, in adhering to its chosen function, and in moving slowly, was right.

The attack from the right wing really began after the Plymouth congress, when some Catholic reformers, unnamed, were condemned in a Catholic paper as “ Fabian.” This was taken as intended for the Guild, and an answer from Preston was printed,

though I cannot be sure that Father Plater himself wrote a single letter. There was a disclaimer from the author of the attack, who based himself, however, on the view that the London School of Economics, to which the Guild had not failed to direct its attention, was thoroughly Fabianized. But this storm blew over for the time, and since one of the loudest speakers, it should in fairness be said, afterwards left the Catholic Church, it is possible that he never fully grasped those principles which he seemed to be so fiercely defending. Father Plater's affection never failed to follow him.

Later on new difficulties arose, not indeed directly over the C.S.G., but over some correspondence in a Catholic periodical in which Socialist principles appeared to some to be advocated. The C.S.G. took no part, or wished to take no part, in this particular controversy between individuals, but it was claimed that it ought to throw some weight on the anti-Socialist side and declare itself against the writer of the incriminated matter. It was asked, in fact, that it should say whether Socialism was "patient of a Catholic interpretation," and this demand supplied the formulæ for the Cardiff congress. A report had actually been drawn up on the "Teaching and Tendency of the Publications" of the Guild, which I have carefully perused, not in order to controvert it, but to collect an impression of what the opponents of the Guild really felt about it.

The report objects to the actual teaching of members of the Guild, but professes itself still more perturbed because it considers that the Guild either gives people to understand that its doctrines are those of the Church herself, or, so mixes up its doctrine

with Catholic doctrines, that it becomes difficult or impossible for the ordinary readers to distinguish which is which. The report demanded that the Guild should make itself known as "a small knot of democratic politicians, trying legitimately enough to prove that their views, though peculiar, are not inconsistent with membership of the Catholic Church—quite a useful function to fulfil, if the doctrines are not too peculiar"; or a new element should be infused into the Guild, and "its economic extravagances pruned away." Owing to the speeches at the Cardiff congress, the correctness of the Guild's attitude to ecclesiastical authority became clear, and also its attitude to Socialism was defined; so it might have been thought that the future was serene. However, a letter from one of its members about a particular point of finance in war-time provided the occasion for a renewed criticism of the Guild as a whole, and it was asked, in effect, not only to assert, as it had done, that it was opposed to Socialism as condemned by the Church, but to say in what sense it had been condemned by the Church, a matter for the Bishops to settle. This was indeed to ask that the Guild should do exactly what it had been, before, accused of doing.

The request, however, had its value in this, that it provoked what has always been legitimate and usually beneficial in the Church: the discussion of ecclesiastical pronouncements. It was, and is, of the highest importance to know, if possible, not only that Socialism has been condemned by the Church, but what exactly Socialism is. Else we may think that to be condemned which is not. The first thing, I daresay, to ascertain was what precisely Leo XIII meant to condemn. This was an historical

point.¹ Father Plater collected opinions of theologians, whom I naturally leave anonymous, just as I do the critics of the Guild themselves. But they were quite front-rank men, and not English only. France and Germany have been, I imagine, more accustomed than we have to examine in all their bearings, including the historical one, decisions of practical as well as of theoretical import like those of Pius and of Leo upon Socialism. These authorities considered that historically Pius and Leo had intended to condemn that universal and absolute socialist communism which seeks to suppress all private property as being wrong or at least anti-social in itself. It was also held in France that Socialism, as actually conceived and taught there, admitted a certain amount of property, at least extending to the fruits of personal labour, or to goods consumable by use, or non-capitalist means of production. It admitted, too, the right to bequeath such goods, no less than Leo proclaimed the natural right of man to the soil that he cultivates and the right to bequeath it to his children. If, then, it were asked if Leo condemned a form of social reform which admitted individual property in all save capitalist instruments of production, it would have to be said that historically he did not. This does not imply that such a system of reform was desirable, nor yet that it might not be condemned by subsequent Roman decrees. The question remained historical, and Leo and his predecessors were said to have condemned only what was in their time

¹ That since his time Catholics should not use the name Socialist, even the term "Christian Socialist," seems clear, since he declared that this name had "justly" fallen into desuetude. But the thing was still more important than the name.

universally meant by Socialism—a radical, irreligious Socialism, that denied the *natural right* to all private property. I cannot go into a discussion raised by an eminent patristic scholar, who urged that the all but universal doctrine of the Fathers was that “common ownership” is of its nature more in accord with God’s original design than is private ownership, which, originating in sin, is only to be tolerated as a discipline for sinful nature. Moral progress would therefore logically imply the gradual transference of property to common dominion. St. Thomas was said to be “about the first” to speak of private ownership as a “natural” right. It at any rate emerged that it is still quite uncertain what the State may or may not do in concrete instances. No one protests against the State monopoly of salt, tobacco, etc., which existed in the Papal States, who farmed out their monopolies to vendors, while controlling prices. When London bought out eight Water Companies and made the Water Board, or when the Dock Companies were put under the control of the Port of London Authority, or, in short, when trams, electric light, etc., are municipalized, opinions may differ as to the wisdom or success of these proceedings, but they are not argued against, I take it, even in principle. The question of limit in practice remained still more completely open. Cannot the case be conceived of a State which, while remaining quite correct as to theory, might yet judge it right, and be recognized as right in so judging it, to assume complete control, at any rate in particular circumstances, of *all* means of production, of course with adequate compensation? It is hard to deny the *possibility* of this.

All this controversy took on an immediately prac-

tical colour when at the London conference of 1918 the Labour Party was held by some to have "gone Socialist," and that it was henceforward impossible for a loyal Catholic to belong to it. The problem was felt so urgent that the case was forwarded to Rome, which has hitherto refrained from answering, as have our own Bishops. The exact point is this. No Catholic can adhere to that Socialism which the Popes have condemned. No Catholic could, therefore, belong to any party an essential item in whose programme, involving of necessity the approval of each member, consisted in that Socialism which Rome had condemned. The first question therefore was whether the phrase "the basis of the common ownership of the means of production," introduced in 1918 by the Labour Party into its constitution, involved a condemned doctrine. The phrase certainly does not involve the forcible confiscation of all private property without compensation. If nothing else, a gloss by Mr. Sidney Webb has made that clear. A Catholic might also argue that such a phrase was rather of the nature of a pious (or impious) aspiration, and never likely to inspire a practical policy, and even that a few more experiments in nationalization would cause disillusionment and prevent any likelihood of the success of the general scheme. He might even argue that no one ever gives equally full allegiance to every item in his party's programme. Much that it actually went so far as to settle on might win a corporate vote in spite of his vigorous protest. A Catholic might therefore urge that the Labour Party has not, as a party, "gone Socialist" in the condemned sense.

The further practical question, though a subordinate one, arose whether a Catholic might in any case

belong to the Labour Party for purposes of permeation. By many such a line of action was deprecated as impracticable, by others as wrong both in policy and in principle. To others the problem seemed to turn entirely upon whether Catholics could do this in sufficient numbers to act as a real clog upon Socialist excesses. It was asked what alternative was suggested to Catholics who believed in principles short indeed of Socialist, yet undoubtedly those of "Labour," if they might not join the Labour Party. To form a rival Labour Party seemed even more "impracticable," and even a fantastic dream. The same applied to the plan to form Catholic trade unions, parallel to the others. For, it was urged, most Trade Unions demanded regular contributions to the Labour Party itself, and to belong to *them* committed you to *it*. It had to be acknowledged that a prohibition would put a strain upon the consciences of thousands of Catholic working-men (for they could not exist, practically, outside Unions) which might well prove too much for them, especially as they were lacking, on the whole, in that Catholic social education which the C.S.G. was, and still is, the only organization professing to supply. Not only, then, would Catholics have to be obedient to a veto of which they were quite unable even to begin to see the *raison d'être*, and their obedience would be sulky at best ; but they would be deprived of any means of political expression, since they would certainly not join the other political parties ; they would moreover be in a state of horrible and soon intolerable isolation from their fellow-workers. Failing courage for this they would frankly disobey, and be driven out of the Church. It would also harden the Labour Party into taking the worst and

most anti-Catholic view of itself, and provide every excuse for active persecution, especially if a Labour Government were to come into power. Finally, most people, as Aristotle said, cannot draw distinctions, and the distinctions here to be drawn were undoubtedly very subtle. The ordinary man would certainly suppose that the Church had simply condemned the Labour Party, and with it, all the aspirations for reform which we recognize as amply legitimate. All things considered, then, it seemed to Father Plater impossible to refuse freedom to Catholics to belong to the Labour Party, until Authority definitely forbade it, which so far it had shown no signs of doing. Not only they would not, by doing so, label themselves as Socialist, but a Labour candidate is actually forbidden to offer himself as Socialist. And a strong group of Catholics in the Labour Party would be able to effect as good results as the Socialists in it, who were, after all, relatively few, would effect harm. As they had won their influence there by a most self-sacrificing education, the only proper thing to do was to provide Catholics with an education involving no less self-sacrifice, but orthodox. They could then be trusted to take a keen and intelligent part in political life, without sacrificing any of their Catholic principles, and, indeed, influence in the direction of wise and serene far-reaching reform those with whom they came in contact.

I have spent some space over this controversy, which was renewed by a resolution passed in 1921 at a conference of the Catholic Confederation, owing to the predominance of members present from a local group, but this was after Father Plater's death, and I wished to speak of it only in so far as, and

because, it affected him.¹ It could not be passed over in silence, because it preoccupied him for many years, and no account of his life could fail to indicate so massive a content of his mind ; nor again, because it cast so heavy a load of anxiety over his last two years, that this pressure, coming upon him at an hour when every pressure should have been removed, cannot but be recognized as having hastened his collapse. I do not pronounce any verdict on the rights and wrongs of the matter any more than he did ; that was, and is, for ecclesiastical authority to do ; and no one who knew Father Plater will hesitate to feel sure he would at once and most cheerfully have accepted any such decision ; but I undoubtedly feel it right to state at least the case that he felt himself to have, lest his known views should seem, if undefended, to have been indefensible.

In 1915 the most important publication by far was Father Plater's own *Primer of Peace and War*, at least from the point of view of immediate needs. There was nothing quite like it, I think, in England, and this accounted for more attention being paid it in the non-Catholic press than had hitherto been usual as regards the publications of the Guild. But in some ways more permanently valuable was Miss Fletcher's *Christian Feminism*. All this kind of book

¹ It should be noticed that the resolution, by defining Socialism as " the nationalization of *all* the means of production, distribution, and exchange," added a word—" all "—which was left out, presumably on purpose, in the incriminated lines of the Labour Party document. Yet it makes the whole difference. If, to be a Socialist, you must accept *that* formula, the Labour Party is not Socialist, for it does not put it forward for acceptance, and Catholics can belong to it safely, as in fact the Bishop of Northampton showed in Lent, 1919, and the late Archbishop of Liverpool, speaking at Wigan, October 1919.

strove to disentangle Catholic principles from the welter of opinion and from the mass of prejudice, and was therefore peculiarly adapted to continuous use in study-clubs.

A remarkable symptom of the robust adolescence of the Guild was the fact that this year for the first time it organized an independent assembly, held at Birmingham. This course was indeed to some extent forced on the Guild because the war precluded the holding of a congress; none the less it showed great courage to attempt any such thing at all, and that it was so successful—it filled the great Birmingham Town Hall to its utmost capacity on the Sunday afternoon—thoroughly justified the experiment. There is a sad pleasure in recording that the late Mr. Cecil Chesterton addressed one of his most brilliant speeches to this audience.

I will only add that the spiritual side of the Catholic social movement was emphasized by a special meeting of ex-retreatants being held, and by the preaching of special sermons in many of the city churches. In the department of organization, the year had seen the wise grouping of local study-clubs, where there were several, in local councils. Thus at Burnley the six local study-clubs were formed into the Burnley Council of Catholic Social Study Clubs, and each club, beside its own weekly meetings, met all the rest in a common meeting once a month. Similar councils existed at Preston and on Tyneside, and elsewhere the tendency was towards the same thing.

But it was noticeable that the 1916 number of the Year-book for the first time bore a special title, that of *National Reconstruction*, and this suggested that the Year-books would cease henceforward to

be collections of isolated essays, or of statistics, however valuable, and would undertake to seek, express, or form Catholic opinion on some one general topic of interest.

The Year-book for 1917, narrating the work done in 1916, was called *Catholics in England, their Needs and Opportunities*; perhaps the most interesting event of the year, in view of future developments, was the fact that the annual meeting of the C.S.G. was held at Oxford.¹ To those who were of old accustomed to that city the almost mystical enthusiasm of those who were not came as a revelation. It was described, by a writer in the *Bulletin*, as the "Mecca of their craft," for those whose work lay, for the most part of their lives, in drab surroundings. Even the visits to colleges and other ancient buildings seemed to many "the return of the disinherited." Franciscan, Dominican, Benedictine, in the habits to which pre-Reformation Oxford was so familiar, were there, read papers, acted as guides. Cardinal Manning looked down from the walls of Balliol Hall on the first Catholic meeting since the Reformation to be held in his old college, and the meeting was concerned with what lay so close to his heart, social service: for "Training in Citizenship" was the subject there discussed, under the leadership of the Archbishop of Birmingham. It was appropriate too that the vote of thanks should be proposed by Mr. Leo Ward, grandson of the Ward who was turned out of Balliol and the University itself for the views that led him soon

¹ Father Plater had had the good idea to prepare a C.S.G. "Guide to Oxford," which taught us a lot about that city and relieved the imagination from any too great strain when the times came for showing visitors round the University.

enough into the Catholic Church. Father Plater, need I say, was everywhere, and his Hall began to give a hospitality, and to receive a friendliness from its guests, which will long, I hope, continue, and has certainly not ceased. Mr. A. Clutton Brock spoke at this meeting and his wit and charm were great assets in its success, and all the more grateful as coming from one not himself a Catholic.

The Year-book of 1918 had for its title *A Christian Social Crusade*, and dealt with the scheme of social reconstruction put forth by the Interdenominational Conference of Social Service Unions. On this very important question, that of Catholic co-operation with non-Catholic societies, I have spoken elsewhere and need not say anything here. The year's annual meeting had been this time in Preston, and was really an astonishing success, had not indeed Preston the reputation of doing anything it undertakes at all with success. For the first time, the Guild was given a civic welcome, in the Town Hall; a mass meeting of 3,000 filled the Palace theatre under the chairmanship of the Archbishop of Liverpool, when the "Future of the Worker" was discussed. An interdenominational conference was held at which Miss Lucy Gardner, the Mayor of Preston, and other non-Catholics spoke in the friendliest spirit of co-operation. The question of social study in schools and colleges was assisted by the creation of a Board of Junior Studies at Oxford, under Dom A. Parker, O.S.B., and the very capable assistance of Miss Mary Segar, whose experience in the schools was most valuable; two new "First Textbooks" on *Questions of the Day* and *The Gospel and the Citizen* were particularly useful in this

department. It was during this year that the Pope's *Peace Note* had been published.

In 1919 the Guild was ten years old. Its 1919 Year-book was then not inappropriately devoted to a review of what the Guild had done and was standing for. This book is so important that it ought to be bought by everyone interested in the Guild, because 1919 is a real landmark in its existence, and again, a sort of test year by which the quality of any future advance may be judged. Enough, then, to say that in that year there were about 110 study-clubs, with a membership of about 1,000, but besides these there was an equal number of clubs which, though not affiliated to the C.S.G., used its textbooks; the very numerous classes, also using C.S.G. textbooks, in some forty or fifty secondary schools, and those organized by the C.W.L., brought the number of serious students of C.S.G. literature up to several thousands.

Another reason why this particular Year-book ought to be very well known is that it contains a clear and reasonable assessment of what the work before the Guild may be said to be. The sands of Father Plater's life were already running rapidly out, and it is here that his ideals are perhaps most explicitly enshrined. The conference had been in 1918 at Stoke-on-Trent: Mr. W. A. S. Hewins¹ made a speech that Father Plater described as "glorious"; it frankly declared that England had no political or social hope until she returned to the principles thrown overboard 400 years ago. The speech had wide reverberations.

But I may be allowed to offer as no more than

¹ Director of the London School of Economics, 1895-1903, and Parliamentary Under-Secretary for the Colonies, 1917-18.

my own opinion that the Year-book for 1920 is, on its intrinsic merits, as important as any. It is called a *Guide to Students*, and after a very striking synopsis of the various existing institutions catering for adult education, it goes on to describe all the options offered to would-be Catholic students—clubs, classes, and the like. It continues by giving in outline study courses for clubs or classes, and bibliographies, so excellent that the mere keeping them up to date ought not to be a very difficult task.

The conference this year was again held at Oxford, October 3-5; the Mayor was prevented by illness from receiving it civically at the Town Hall: his deputy proved a courteous and kindly substitute. In this conference the need felt by the C.S.G. for effective apologetic books was strongly emphasized, but apart from another speech by Mr. W. A. S. Hewins, the most notable—indeed, a sensational—event was the speech by Père Méeus, of Belgium, in Balliol Hall on the Sunday. He spoke on social conditions in Belgium, but his account of his own adventures during the occupation of Brussels provided such excellent “copy” that the C.S.G. conférencier found himself quoted, under startling headlines, in every paper in the country.

The Year-book for 1921 was little more than a review of national Catholic forces as displayed in the first post-war congress at Liverpool in 1920. That the Guild should have been asked to undertake this duty was a great compliment: it accounts, however, for the book containing less information bearing directly on the Guild than most of the Year-books do. Instead of an annual conference, there was a summer school at Oxford, of which I have spoken elsewhere.

What, one may ask, is the Guild's destiny ? Had it been, as some critics thought it was, a "one-man show," it will most certainly collapse, now that the man is gone.

But it was not that. I do not say that there was, in Father Plater, no *instinct* to absorb and dominate. He *felt* he was powerful, and he had the temptation to apply his power, especially when things were going slowly, or confusingly, or perversely, and when he felt tired. He had, moreover, to hold out against the tremendous pressure of so many to whom the C.S.G. and its works simply were "Father Plater" : they accepted even what they did not like in its programme because they thought it *him*. I quote a few witnesses, all but one working people :

"To get four or five lads to meet continuously and regularly for any purpose, the spur must come from within them and not from without. The desire isn't there and it must be created if the club is to survive. . . . *To me this study circle is you, and I must keep it alive.*"

"The C.S.G.'s social programme is all right, but its attitude to other programmes makes me shy off . . . Catholic principles are all right, but in their application to social reform there is no infallible guide. I believe the Catholic method of examining all proposals as they arise by reference to certain principles is sound. And all cut and dried complete schemes, whether Socialistic or otherwise, are of little use. While I haven't a mind that takes kindly to being labelled as being of a particular political brand, the C.S.G. presents nevertheless a difficulty. You, however, Father, present no difficulty. I swallow you completely and without reserve."

"Father, I have been absolutely ignorant of what Catholics have done and what Catholics yet may do. Your book on Germany which I have read I find very stimulating. A

revelation quite. I always had the notion that Catholics didn't count much in social reform and that when they did figure at all it was on the side of the old order of things. . . . and that the refashioning of the conditions of life here did not concern them much. . . . Your book gave me a glad sort of feeling, and now you have to do what Bishop Ketteler did for Germany. How much you have done and are doing I am just beginning to realize. I am pretty sure you can do as much as any old German bishop (bless him) has done. And the same work as he did, it is plain, must be done here. You have started this work, you have no excuse (nor do you want any, I'm sure). God help you, you have got to finish it."

"Our study-clubs have trained men to ask questions that scarcely a Catholic in the United Kingdom can answer, and none of the books give the answers. Our priests who have cultivated social studies have too often a queer mixture of the doctrines of G. K. Chesterton and the practical proposals of Sidney Webb. We are reaching a chaotic condition in which Jack knows more than his master. I see that there is to be a special meeting of the hierarchy of America to consider 'social education.' Archbishop X told me that a meeting of the Canadian hierarchy had been arranged to consider the same question. The need of higher studies is extreme. You and A B are the only members of the X Y who have shown comprehension of the needs of the situation."

Only once, I think, he received a considered and, I dare say, a merited "admonition" from a kindly-wise fellow-worker.

"This is a growl, so bear it patiently and smilingly, in true Plateristic fashion.

"First about X. I quite see the drawbacks and the rubs, but there is the other side of the medal: X's absolutely devoted interest, all the years of unremitting labour, all the tiresome, dull, day by day, year in, year out fag, such

as the most hard-working of the other members have never come near ; all the intelligent, open-minded, cosmopolitan, really cultured (hateful word) contribution to the Guild. It seems as if all this is to go for so little now when the Guild is unavoidably changing its character, and expanding in the North and Midlands. More help is wanted and new blood at headquarters. In a sense individuals have to be sacrificed to things, but the things won't prosper, I am sure, if there is any failure to individuals in courtesy and kindness and gratitude. If we are going to split up into factions in a way over this, that will again spoil the work. All these Associations are inclined to break up into little coteries ; again, X helps to keep us from that danger, being constitutional as well as democratic. You, I think, must be an Aristodemocrat, not truly a Democrat, but one who believes in the one-man rule, provided it is the right man. It *seems* a very good rule, but it does not work well, for all that. For instance, this branch of the Guild here, how can one take a keen interest in it, when each time I think of it I feel that it is absolutely a one-man affair. That man happens to be very much the right man, being yourself, but it is not in the spirit of the Guild (at least as I understand it) to run things in this way. Now surely, if ever, is the time for men and women, lay and clerical, to put their heads together and work loyally and whole-heartedly at all the immense amount of reconstruction work waiting to be done.

"Here endeth the growl (for the present). Z says 'there is no one like Charles,' so I have confidence that you won't mind my saying what I have had in my mind lately.

"Yours, hoping you won't be cross,

A B C."

No one who knew Father Plater will doubt that he accepted this friendly little rebuke, from a layman, with *happy humility*. He "curled up" under snubs, even when he felt he earned them—he even wrote a little poem on himself, in which he says that his "plausibility" alone avoided him the

"snubs I often earn." But this sort of affectionate, and, may I say, spiritually good counsel made him happy and expanded his energy in the atmosphere of good-will and fraternity. Here I do not want to dwell on that "humility" which his collaborators discerned in him and to which, in conversation with me, they have so often and independently recurred. I think the following sentence from one of his own letters really sums the matter up :

"Don't abolish the poor . . . committee, but rouse them up. Wait till I get at 'em."

He believed in himself ; he laughingly acknowledged his own powers of persuading and stimulating ; he meant to use them, but in order to get others to work spontaneously, perseveringly, co-operatively. Towards the end he meant to withdraw from too much personal direction, he wanted to dissociate the Guild from one man or one place ; he sought for many centres of interactive vitality.

This he achieved. The C.S.G. has good leaders and strong friends. It will pursue its chosen line of studying the Church's social doctrine, and the world in which that doctrine is to be applied. Others perhaps will attempt, experimentally, that application. It would be outside my plan to relate, or praise, the truly self-sacrificing applications of it that are being tried, say, at Ditchling, or in Glasgow. With all this the C.S.G. can, and should, co-operate. Neither on this side nor on that is a monopoly of wisdom or of courage. But it remains that the true glory of the C.S.G. is that great mass of unknown men and women who, when the day's work that earns food, clothes, and roof is done, add to it yet more, and toil at home over books or meet in eager friendly

groups for discussion and instruction, and *form their minds* about that human life which is ours, and which God came to share.

Already their work has been tremendous, and an effect is visible which necessitated *them*, and not one man, for its cause. The days are definitely over when Father Plater could write to Mr. Devas that our "Catholic reading aimed only at amusement or direct devotion. . . . *The Key to the World's Progress*—how many have read it? Do our schools read it?" or again, that "people take one for a Socialist if one shows a mild interest in drains"; that "one meets either with apathy or shrieks of denunciation"—"apathy or panic."

A public opinion is very definitely formed by now; neither laity nor clergy *can*, we may safely say, disregard Catholic social study; nor will they wish to. I end this chapter by quoting the best message that reached me when Father Plater's death was heard of in the North:

"It was his life that first put us on to this work: his death has clinched us to it."

Chapter XIV
IRELAND AND AFTER
March–December 1920

*“Of the beauty of kindness I speak,
Of a smile, of a charm
On the face it is pleasure to meet,
That gives no alarm.*

*“Of the soul that absorbeth itself
In discovering good,
Of that power which outlasts health,
As the spell of a wood*

“Outlasts the sad fall of the leaves. . . .”

T. STURGE MOORE : *Kindness.*

(i)

FATHER PLATER left Oxford on St. Patrick's Day and crossed to Ireland on March 19. He fled from Dublin and too many friends, but found yet more in Galway, and made still more. From University to Bishop's House, from Labour Exchange to convent school and woollen factory, he goes, during this week in Galway, asking questions, offering suggestions, trying to make up his mind about land-hunger, emigration, the tragedy of politics, and all that he should have forbidden himself. But it takes long to learn how to rest. Even the dying fishing suburb of the Claddagh would have made for pessimism, had it not been for the charm of the fishing-folk, with whom he spent long hours. Children followed him everywhere in crowds; he played at shop with them; he went to hurley matches; he was taught to thatch; and to shell mussels; he devised new ways of killing dog-fish; learnt much about different sorts of boats and about prices. He paddles and he sails, leaving at 6 a.m. to

fish off South Island, Aran, nineteen Irish miles away. It was like, he felt, being in St. Peter's boat. "We keep God always in our hearts," said one fisher-boy. "He thinks of nothing but Almighty God," was said of another. The men wanted to know what sort of boats the Apostles used and what sort of fish they caught, and I remember that he wrote agitatedly to ask me to find out.

On the 31st he left for Cleggan, the port for the Island of Inishbofin. He was taken across next day, Maundy Thursday, in the boat of the island's parish priest, and on landing received from all alike the "Welcome to Bofin," which his priesthood made even warmer, if possible, than it would else have been. The sheer grandeur of that amazing Atlantic-battered crag intoxicated him; he spent his days wandering and climbing its rocks. It was St. Colman's Island, and he learnt much about the Saint and haunted the great square graveyard where the ruins of his church are. But as ever, it was the people on whom his heart was set. His first acquaintance was made the very next day, when he took the Good Friday service in the evening.

"The acolytes had set their heart on having Benediction, and the altar was a blaze of candles. This for Good Friday seemed somewhat unusual, so I compromised with Rosary and Stations of the Cross. Then we had the 'Adoration of the Cross,' for which the people came up to the altar rails. Somewhat rashly I took for the purpose the very heavy metal cross of the altar. I very nearly dropped, cross and all. For those men and women and children just clung on to the cross, as Magdalen to the feet of Jesus, and would not let it go. They covered it with kisses, and there was a look of compassion on their faces which I shall never forget. How God must love those islanders!"

The population, about 800—but even since his visit it must have shrunk—was all Catholic except the one policeman, who, “to the mystification of the rest, belongs to the Plymouth Brethren.” And he has left. No one needed him. I remember how impressed Father Plater was to find that these islanders, who, learned men declare, believe in fairies, filled the church nightly during Lent for a very strenuous course of instruction on the Gospel of St. Matthew, and had another—quite scientific—in Christian ethics. I heard the names of the books that were used; there is many an English congregation that would be the better for a dose of them. But Catholic Faith means the best of civilizations; and Italian peasants, who neither read nor write, yet find the English tourist to be *poco educato*.

Father Plater visited neighbouring islands, and returned on and off to Galway, and on April 17 decided to cross to Aran. I cannot resist quoting part of his description of this crossing.

“We are at the quay before the skipper is awake. We rouse him from his fore-cabin, a smoky little triangular hole, where there is just room to lie down and not quite enough to sit up. He introduces us to the mate, who is also all the crew—a quiet boy, who would like to give up boating and go to America.

“Meanwhile the news has spread that the Connemara hooker is going to call at Aran, and two more passengers apply for places. One of them is bound for Aranmore with five young pigs. Both men wear the picturesque Aran homespun of yellow and indigo.

“There is some difficulty in getting the pigs on board. Each is skilfully, but not without sundry squeals, inserted into a sack, which is then tied up and deposited on the

top of the flour sacks which fill the hold. At first they are restive, and lurch about ; then they settle down and the trouble begins. For none of us can remember which contains flour and which contains live pig. At various stages of the journey I sat on one, pillowed my head upon another, and trod heavily on a third. The last gave a piercing shriek and breathed heavily for the rest of the voyage. I was quite anxious about him, but was reassured by the vigour with which he resisted the operation of landing when we finally arrived at Aran. But that was a very long time afterwards. . . .

"The captain, in the exuberance of his piety, suggested that I should say Mass there and then. I explained that this was impracticable, but offered to bless the boat after breakfast.

"At eleven o'clock the wind drops completely. Dead calm. This lasts for four hours, during which we all take turns at the two oars. We only shift her about a mile, as the tide is against us. Anyhow, we do not drift back to Galway, which is something to be thankful for.

"There is only one pipe on board, and it is conscientiously passed round between the skipper, the mate, and the owner of the now quiescent pigs.

"At three o'clock we pray for a breeze. It comes. Gratefully I pipe all hands on deck to bless the boat. We begin with the *Itinerarium*, which I find in my Breviary. Then extempore collects and prayers. All kneel with folded hands and bent heads, most devoutly, and the boat is left to take care of itself. . . .

"It is not until nine o'clock that we round the lighthouse of Inishmore. We have been thirteen hours in that open boat ! "

Aran impressed Father Plater even more if possible than Inishbofin did. To start with, its geographical formation is quite extraordinarily interesting.

"It is a great ragged lump of limestone. The formation is very curious : the stone lies in great sheets or terraces,

perfectly level, and perfectly smooth, sometimes unbroken in surface for fifty or sixty yards, elsewhere full of cracks and rifts, several feet deep, in which are rare ferns and mosses.

“By the roadside, near Kilronan, is a spacious handball court, built on what I took to be a well laid concrete floor; but the floor turned out to be a stretch of the natural rock.”

And amid the holy traditions of the island, Father Plater found more healing than hitherto. He sat long where saints had lived, and realized, indeed, that they were still, as the people felt, alive.

The Aran race filled him with admiration.

“It is indeed a glorious race of men we find on Aran. Healthy and strong, tall, lithe, and handsome, and with a noble carriage, they lead a natural, hardy life. They are honest to a degree which puts more prosperous nations to shame. They are strictly temperate, and obscenity is not so much as named amongst them. Friendly, hospitable, open-hearted, unsuspicious, they have a vivid faith and a solid piety. What has created this type? No peculiarity of stock. They are kin to the men of the mainland. The great ideal which has moulded this people into this firm and noble character is, I doubt not, their Catholic religion. . . . And it is religion; not the superstition, however charming, diagnosed by the anthropologist. . . .

“A big, heavy man was standing in his canoe, hanging to the side of the steamer, which he was unloading, when the curragh slipped away from under him. Quick as thought a little man on board grasped his wrists, and for ten minutes, until help could be given, held him hanging in mid-air. The big man prayed fervently: ‘May Our Lady strengthen your wrists.’ This good man in his extremity did not invoke the aid of the fairies. It would never have occurred to him to do so. He, like the rest of the islanders, was a well-instructed Catholic. He may, again, like the rest of

the islanders, have amused himself by handing down the excellent fables that have grown up in every land. He may even have had his little superstitions: we all have. But his Catholic Faith was the great living trunk of his mental life: the rest were little parasites which fell off in moments when he was most himself.

"Yet I have been reading a book about Aran which debases the religion of that fine people into a mass of fairy tales and superstitions. Try that on the people of Aran and see what they say. I would not advise you to try it on their priest.

"Because, though a stranger and an Englishman, I was a Catholic and a priest, I am confident that I had more in common with the people of Aran, was more intimate with them, knew them better after a few days' visit, than was possible for one who, though spending weeks among them, cannot distinguish their religion, that great well-spring of thought and action, from the fairy tales which help to pass away the winter evenings."

He arrived back in Oxford from his Irish holiday on April 23. But even he did not consider he was much better, and I scarcely think anyone else did. In fact, the summer passed quietly till the C.S.G. school began on June 26. He had been writing peacefully, and getting into touch with the *Catholic Herald of India*, and interesting himself in the repetition of last year's "Religion and Life Week," at which Baron F. von Hügel was this time the Catholic speaker. He lectured to a University audience of some 900 on "The Supernatural," and made so deep an impression that he was required to answer questions for an hour after his talk in a smaller but very crowded hall. Father Plater was glad to put him up, as so often, at Campion Hall. Arrangements were pushed forward for repeating the "Week" in the Lent term of 1921, but Father Plater was not

there to see that. On another occasion Father Plater himself took the chair, when Bishop Gore and Dr. Selbie of Mansfield spoke. The only other notable ripple upon the calm was a local motor-bus strike: with Dr. Selbie and Dr. Headlam, Regius Professor of Divinity, and others, he discussed this situation in detail, and went with Dr. Carlyle to interview the manager of the company, and also saw many of the men and their leaders. I do not presume to assess the actual share which he had in the settlement of the strike, and I cannot pretend to remember how far I was serious when I judged that peace was obtained from the moment when he offered his snuff-box to representatives first of one party, then of the other. Anyhow, it was difficult to keep up much animosity when both sides had patted Jimmy!

On week-ends he often profited by the hospitality of Wroxton Abbey, where the Hall was sending a priest each Saturday to say Mass for the household of Lord North. The peaceful hours in that genial atmosphere did him real good, as far as anything could now do it.

The first C.S.G. Summer School was so important an event that I do not hesitate to quote considerable extracts concerning it from Father Plater's own account in the *Month* for August 1920.

"The Summer School held by the Catholic Social Guild took place at Oxford from Saturday, June 26, till Monday, July 5. It was attended by fifty students, most of them regular study-club members, working in various parts of the country under the direction of the Guild. They came from Preston, Sheffield, Bristol, Leadgate, Blackburn, Stockton, Hull, Gateshead, Wigan, London, and twenty-one other centres. Thirty of them came on 'scholarships' awarded

by the Guild as the result of an examination : that is to say, they had their travelling expenses, board, lodging, and fees paid by the Guild. This was only possible owing to a generous benefaction for the purpose made by one of our oldest members. The other twenty scholars paid all their own expenses. Of the ten women who attended the School two came on scholarships. Besides the fifty student visitors, a few resident Catholics attended the daily lectures and took part in the life of the School.

"There were miners and shipyard men, postal workers, textile workers, railwaymen, engineers, clerks, and shopkeepers. There was a Labour Exchange manager and the manager of an industrial concern. Yet there was a marked similarity of type among the men. Nearly all were young men and nearly all were wage-earners actively connected with trade unions, co-operative societies, and Catholic organizations. Many were members of local authorities, taking a prominent part in the municipal affairs of their respective towns ; all were serious social students, and in most cases leading members of study-clubs. . . .

"There were two lectures each morning and one every afternoon. The first morning lecture (save for the opening lecture on the Monday) was given by Father Joseph Rickaby, S.J., and dealt with ethical principles. The nature of morality, law, conscience, authority, the State, and similar subjects, were expounded with that clearness and charm which mark Father Rickaby's lectures, and as one of the men said, they had never before seen things ' hang together ' like that.

"The second morning lecture was given by Mr. F. F. Urquhart, Fellow and Tutor of Balliol College, who dealt with the Middle Ages and their civilization.

"After each of Mr. Urquhart's lectures there was a time for questions, which came thick and fast, and they were good questions. . . .

"In the afternoons of the last four days of the week, essays were read to tutors. Father Rickaby and Mr. Urquhart took the men four at a time for an hour or so, and

discussed their essays in detail. This was an extraordinarily useful exercise for the men, who took the utmost pains with their work and spent a great deal of time on it, in some cases rising at unearthly hours in the morning and in others, we suspect, burning midnight gas. This individual tuition is an indispensable feature of a Summer School. . . .

"The evening lectures (at 5.15) were given by Mr. Henry Somerville, and fitted in admirably with the ethics and history of the mornings. The men were now called upon to face modern practical questions such as Socialism, Capitalism, Nationalization, Co-operation, with a groundwork of ethics and a background of history. . . .

"As a kind of textbook for the whole course, much use was made of the twopenny pamphlet published by the Guild, and written by Father Husslein, entitled *A Catholic Social Platform*. . . .

"What did these fifty students take away with them? Not merely a knowledge of particular facts hitherto unknown, but above all, an increased power of dealing with facts, seeing their significance, checking them, grouping them. They learned, indeed, *how* to study. 'We shall be able to go on for ourselves much better after this,' many of them said. They now had some notion of a *method*. . . .

"This sense of a new power growing within them—a power of balancing evidence and seeing both sides and applying principles as well as of clearing away misunderstandings and avoiding ambiguities and expressing their thought clearly and tersely—was much stimulated by the informal talks from the Master of Balliol and Mr. Ernest Barker, of New College, to which the students listened with a kind of amazed delight. The procedure was simple. The students asked questions and put objections. These questions ranged over such topics as the ideals of labour, education, University training, wages and hours, the employment of women, the State, rights of parents, Guild Socialism, property, art. It was not merely that the Master of Balliol and Mr. Barker drew generously out of their great stores of knowledge: what was still more valuable was that they

showed the students *how* these and similar topics should be handled. For two hours the Master stood the bombardment in the Junior Common Room of his college ; and even after that, it was some time before he could be extricated from the crowd of eager questioners that surrounded him in the quadrangle. . . .

“ Never was a crowd more thirsty for knowledge. They crowded round the Vice-Chancellor, who most kindly showed them over Trinity College, and they remembered all he had to say about the Durham monks who were connected with that great foundation. They took notes greedily at the lectures, and these they could be seen writing out diligently afterwards. Above all, they discussed social questions all day and every day. In the streets, in the College gardens and quadrangles, at their meals, in little groups and larger circles in Common Rooms, they debated and argued and illustrated and questioned.

“ Some of these gatherings were almost of a formal character. The whole fifty sat one evening on a lawn and, with incredible enthusiasm, concerted schemes for impressing Catholic social principles on the mind of the country. . . . There was an instant sense of brotherhood based on their common faith. What could they not do now that they were in touch with one another ?

“ Very definite and practical results may be expected from this Summer School. In the first place, as has been said, the students have gone back to their various parishes with their minds broadened and full of a great hope. Already we hear of an increased impetus given to their study-clubs, of their endeavours to form new clubs in their neighbourhood, of their systematic efforts to propagate Catholic social literature. Moreover, at the garden meeting above referred to, they made up their minds without any doubt that two things must be secured as soon as possible (and they considered, in much detail, the ways and means) : the first was a monthly Catholic magazine dealing with social questions, the second was a Catholic Labour College, at Oxford.”

I will say at once that the Summer School was repeated with no less success in 1921 at Oxford, except that the absence of Father Plater made an irremediable difference to it. That year the whole of Ruskin College was taken by the C.S.G., and its women's hostel, Queen's Gardens. In both these places Mass was daily said. One man after another said to me spontaneously that, for him, Oxford, Campion Hall, Ruskin, the river, the quads, were after all full of the spirit of Father Plater.

And the Labour College¹ is an accomplished fact—a tiny fact, but a real and growing one. May Father Plater's prayers still assist these two enterprises.

After the Summer School he lived quietly again till he went to Oakwood in July to give a retreat to the C.S.G., and then returned to make his own at Oxford. It finished just in time for him to go to the Catholic Congress, the first since the war, held at Liverpool at the end of July and the beginning of August. As a whole, the Congress suffered under grave disabilities owing to the rupture of tradition during the war, and for other reasons. But much work was done, and the C.S.G. took its due share in this. Besides its annual meeting it organized, conjointly with the C.T.S. and the C.Y.M.S., the mass meeting of July 31; it held a joint meeting with the C.T.S. in the afternoon of the same day, at which the subject discussed was the rôle of Apologetics in a fully equipped study-club, and it held another sectional meeting on August 2, at which Mr. W. A. S. Hewins spoke on "The Rights of the Producer," and Mr. F. R. Muir on "The Rights of the Con-

¹ The 1922 C.S.G. Year-book is entirely devoted to describing what has been done and discussing the future.

sumer." The address on "The Church and Labour," at the mass meeting, was by the Rev. Bede Jarrett, O.P., and very much more in the Congress had so definitely social a colour that the Guild could closely associate itself with it. But the greatest compliment paid to the Guild was the request that it should devote the forthcoming Year-book to a review of Catholic Forces on which the Church in England can at this time rely. This it did very effectually and the 1921 Year-book was, in fact, called *Catholic Forces*, and was admirably frank and complete.

None who saw Father Plater during this time will forget how terribly ill he looked; and, after passing through Stonyhurst and Bolton, where he had a C.S.G. Conference on July 15, he became even worse and began, at Oxford, to cause us the greatest anxiety. He was almost due to give a retreat at New Hall, Chelmsford, where the enterprise of the nuns had not only arranged that their superb convent-school should house the retreatants, but had collected twenty-seven men from unaccustomed Essex, half of whom were Protestants.

Father Plater, on his way there, became so ill that he told me afterwards he had intended to telegraph for me to come and give the retreat in his place, than which no better proof can be asked that he was really very ill indeed. However, he persevered, and the retreat was the greatest success. He returned very weak, and, by a sad coincidence, Father O'Dowd, head of St. Charles's House of Studies, fell ill on September 8. He sent for me, and was removed to the Acland Home, where, despite his incredulity that he could be in any danger, I anointed him next day. I could not absolutely

keep this from Father Plater, though I was sure that it would distress him and perhaps be dangerous. He went in fact to see Father O'Dowd several times, and when I was sent for to Father O'Dowd's death-bed on Saturday the 11th, he insisted on following me, though I begged him not to. My reason was partly because there was nothing to be done, and because for this very reason there would be all the better opportunity for Father Plater to give rein to his emotion. It was part of the great-heartedness of Father Plater that he always felt to the full what he was concerned with ; but if I dare say so, it was a defect of his quality that he was not satisfied unless he felt that he was feeling it. I mean he really worked himself into a condition in which he was using nerve-tissue unnecessarily. He did indeed have a bad attack that night, and the doctor had to be fetched when it was very late. A consolation to him was that his mother came to live near by at "Montmartre," the country house of the Sisters of St. Ursula, who have a school at Oxford, and her son was often up there. But quite apart from the fact that he used to walk up that long hill as a rule, to save expense—it was long enough before he could be persuaded to take a taxi up there when he went on Sundays, as henceforth he often did, to say Mass—he began at once to evangelize the whole district of Boar's Hill, where as usual unknown Catholics began to reveal themselves in plenty. But on Monday, September 27, he writes :

"Vac. ends with bad health—*Deo Gratias*. Saw specialist. Will have to ease off—drop at least half my work. Lectures, etc., cancelled. Much time spent on Boar's Hill."

It seems to me right that I should frankly say that he felt this acutely. Every now and then he would say to me unhesitatingly that he was "finished." He absolutely refused to receive encouragement. I think it would have been foolish to try to give it insincerely. He knew himself very well, and was under no real delusion when he recovered strength and spirits and started to work again. It was these short spells of artificial energy which were the most exasperating, I suppose, to witness. He worked, or refused to go to bed, or gulped his meals and bolted off, without the slightest attempt to disguise the fact that he was doing what he had been told not to, and knew it. He acted with the gleeful defiance, at such times, of a child. At other times, of course, he was really ill and quite helpless: then he knew what he wanted and would tell one, and it could be brought. It was merely an affair of brandy and hot-water bottles. But the really trying times were those when he was neither so ill as to need that, not yet well enough to do any work, or even to take an active rest—as by rowing, walking, or the like. He used to scratch, so to say, at work, exhausting his brain and his nerves, until he could not do even that, and then he would retire from public view and remain wretched in his room. One had to guess these hours, or else discover them by some chance, for he was far too unselfish to tell one: he was in a panic of interrupting another man's work, or taking up his time. At night, however, despondency would overcome him, and then he would require companionship and to talk and make plans for a future he was sure he would never see. It must not be thought that this was any sort of cowardice, or that it marked weakness of character. For years, I suppose, his

blood pressure had been so appallingly high that his system had accustomed itself only to feel well when it was, so to say, at its worst. When you saw Father Plater exulting and full of ideas, and with his eyes alight and talking fluently, that really meant that he was almost dangerously ill, with racing blood that threatened dreadful possibilities. It could be lowered somewhat by means of mercury, but to lower it much implied such appalling depression that it could simply not be risked. It was in these hours of relative safety that he needed all sympathy and even patience. For he was unable then to display, or even take, any interest ; he would be quite irresponsible, silent, heavy ; even, administer what, had you not known this, seemed like the harshest snubs. He would be terribly penitent afterwards ; sometimes he could pull himself together and show, for a little, his old brightness. Or some new person or incident or plan would present himself or itself, so that his imagination was sufficiently affected, and he would wake up ; but he would be, in a true sense, not so well for that very reason. My fear during these months was that at any moment he might have—not a grave hæmorrhage, but a slight one, which might have incapacitated him in a dreadful way, and yet not have been fatal. It was almost a case of praying that release might come soon and anyhow completely. Meanwhile he took care of himself erratically, and the first moment he felt well would fling himself into any work that offered itself, and, more tragically, would strive with the most amazing courage to keep up with the necessary grind, the daily correspondence, the odds and ends which his devoted friends, like Mr. Henry Somerville and his assistant,

Mr. Maurice Leahy, were trying to take off his shoulders.

I have wanted to write these pages not, indeed, to make a harrowing picture or to linger in any unjustifiable way over physical distresses, but that it might be known what really was the purgatory, as I certainly believe it in great part to have been, of a man who strove never to allow his friends to guess that he was suffering, nor sought now for expressions of that sympathy he was so ready and so able to give. At the worst of those hours, had someone needing sympathy come to him, he would have woken up and given it as generously as ever. I think that God was schooling him, by means of these long hours of unknown helplessness, to detach his will from his own activities, and from activity.

The Michaelmas term began on October 7. He went much to Boar's Hill or to Wroxton, and wrote a few articles, as a rule quietly, and on subjects which demanded little effort, such as one on "Working-men's Retreats" for the Irish periodical *Studies*, but on the 24th he "wrote six articles for the *Catholic Herald of India* in twenty-four hours." He was also sitting for his portrait, which was being drawn by Miss Margaret Fletcher, who tells me that she, too, was struck by his apparent emancipation from interest in actual movements, even of worldwide importance, and his concentration, rather, on the spiritual forces at work behind the movements. She even says that now that the end was nearing, his love and pity for mankind seemed to her so to have grown that they had swallowed up, almost, his sense of humour. If now and again he still criticized, or rather, described, anyone's oddities, the words would be quickly followed by his whimsical

yet tender smile, and the exclamation that his friends knew so well—"The dear thing!"

During the autumn many schemes were discussed as to the best way of ensuring to him a real rest of at least six months. Sea voyages were thought out, and cruises to South America or even Australia. But though he dallied with these ideas, and got quite excited about Australia, it was too obvious that he was already hatching the wildest schemes of what he would do when he got there, and even a slow journey would not have been much good to him, because he would instantly have put the crew into retreat and started a study-club among the passengers. I told him he would, and he said gleefully that it was an excellent idea. I forget who first suggested Malta, but I was surprised that he showed so much willingness to go there. The essence of the trip was that he should go very slowly by sea; but he soon extricated himself from this plan, and said that he would hate the Bay and that trains did not tire him. Only a little later it became clear that he wanted to go to Malta in any case, because he had been in communication with various persons there concerning the special social and labour problems of that island, and was sure that it was a new and most promising field for his apostolate. Questions had been asked as long ago as September, from Malta itself, as to the character of the Workers' Union, from a Catholic point of view, and the desirability of Maltese working-men joining it and the whole topic of separate trade unions for Catholics had been agitated. Father Plater had felt that while he could give information about England, he could not give advice about Malta; and that since quite serious considerations appeared to be involved,

he would like to go and see for himself. When it became clear that even if Father Plater did go to Malta, a plan of which his doctor approved, he would fling himself into work and get no holiday at all, I will not deny that an innocent plot was hatched. Father Plater was very devoted to Dr. Counsell, who for many years had given the best of his care to Campion Hall and had won the affection of all of us. Dr. Counsell had himself some short time previously had a rather bad breakdown, and a holiday was very clearly indicated. The Oxford atmosphere, however, seems to interfere, in too many people, with the holiday-taking faculty. He was not inclined to take one either. So I represented to Dr. Counsell that if Father Plater went to Malta alone, and overland, he would quite certainly kill himself; it would be an act of almost necessary charity to go with him. To Father Plater I indicated that if he asked Dr. Counsell to accompany him, it would ensure the doctor's getting a holiday; it would be extremely pleasant for him, and we should all like to know that they were looking after one another. This scheme, which, I needn't say, was instantly seen through, was none the less accepted and acted on, to everyone's satisfaction. One more suggestion was made: that the journey should be made via Lourdes; but Father Plater said gravely that he did not see that there was any evidence that those favoured by miracles grew correspondingly in grace; and when he said certain things with a particular kind of gravity, one knew one ought not to argue, and the idea dropped.

The last spell of life in England had not been empty, even as to the exterior. It had included the inauguration of the C.S.G. Summer School, and

the notion of a college for Catholic working-men was definitely before the public. And those who were living with Father Plater will remember, I think, that never before had his days been starred with so many little acts of kindness as these had.

(ii)

Father Plater left England in November 1920, in the company of Dr. H. Counsell and Miss M. Counsell. They went quickly through France, and from Dijon Father Plater wrote back that he had no temptation "to work or to escape." By Nice they went on to Rome, but already Dr. Counsell was wondering at the extraordinary change that was showing itself in his patient. Charles had revived incredibly; he talked and laughed and exulted in the sunshine; he had only to dismount and stand for a few minutes on some platform to accumulate, somehow, all sorts of people round him.

At Rome he spent four days, and there the overwhelming emotion of the place was too much for him, and he had a relapse which prevented him from speaking as he would have wished to the General of the Society of Jesus, to whom he was introduced. The General also was ill, and the interview, though a great happiness to Father Plater, could not have led to any very close acquaintance. However, he saw the Catacombs, and all the places consecrated by the footsteps of the Apostles and by the memories of the first days of the Society in Rome. The rooms of St. Ignatius, indeed, made an almost unbearably strong impression on him, and I think it was the meeting, after so many years, with his old school-friend, Father W. MacMahon, that proved

a sweetening, calming, and I might almost say a saving incident in this little sojourn in Rome.

He recovered his tone, however, directly he left it, and had two very happy days at Naples. Charles Plater, who had captivated Paris *gamins*, triumphed in the yet harder task of managing Neapolitan small boys, and they were as enchanted with him as he with them. Had he the gift of tongues? One would almost think so. He knew no Italian, and the Naples dialect is, after all, a rather special Italian, especially on the lips of a street boy. . . . However, the purchase of an orange, or the gift of some chocolate, established, in an instant, the most amicable relations, and amazing conversations ensued in which each made himself perfectly well understood to the other. They usually ended with inquiries about Mass, and by a promise on the part of the small boy that he would pray, next day, for the sick priest. In the train to the South—for it was proposed that they should cross to Malta by way of Sicily—his spirits rose even higher. Father Plater grew bored with the first-class carriage and announced that he was going out into the corridor, and then intended to explore. After about ten minutes, Dr. Counsell pursued him to see what he was up to. There he was, in a third-class carriage packed to suffocation, talking an astonishing mixture of French, Latin, "Italian," and English to the delighted travellers. He seemed to dominate the whole crowd; they laughed and chattered, and poured out on to platforms to be photographed; they attached themselves to him like leeches, and on the boat to Syracuse would not let him go. In Sicily several of them remained in the neighbourhood; natives, some of them, into whose homes he penetrated; others were

soldiers, *en route* for Tripoli, whose history he soon knew; children escorted him, not asking—what travelling Inglese will believe it?—for his *soldi*, but his blessing. Like the bluejackets at Plymouth long ago, they tumbled down on their knees at unexpected moments to ask that blessing, and then hastened to raid heaven knows what fruit barrows to offer oranges to the lovable, laughing priest. The very guide at Messina, who made Father Plater miss his train, forgot all interested motives, and took him through the ruins to a very different “show-place” from the rest—a tottering convent, where a few nuns still lived, eager, they too, for the saintly Englishman’s prayers. Do not put down all this to Sicilian temperament or what not. How many of us, alas! upon our voyages, give that temperament the chance, even, of revealing itself so sweetly? And there was much more than mere accessibility in Father Plater’s personality. The journey was a triumphal procession; the Catholic fraternity rose in great jets in him and in them; everything else fell off from the soul; disguises, masks, were not so much as thought of; there was instant, joyous recognition.

On December 15 Valetta shows golden through the sunset.

In a diary which was to provide material for future articles like those that related the visit to Ireland, Father Plater tells of the difficult landing and forthwith goes into raptures over the architecture of a town such as he had never seen, and even accumulates facts about the Knights of Malta and their doings, but breaks off, characteristically, to exclaim:

“Knights are much in evidence still, for the K.B.S. badge is everywhere, and its wearers salute the English traveller with a friendly grin.”

On the 17th the symbol at least of a companion that had so far been lacking was discovered :

“To-day,” says the diary, “we discovered the Brown Bulldog. He is extremely fat : the reason for which will presently appear. He followed us persistently, barking all the time. We patted him, but evidently that was not what he wanted. ‘Throw him a penny,’ said a man who was watching us. I did. The dog caught the penny deftly and apparently swallowed it. He then walked deliberately to a neighbouring bun-shop and stood at the door perfectly still. One of the attendants, in a most matter-of-fact fashion, produced a bun from the shop window and threw it to the dog, who at once caught the bun and dropped the penny. We repeated the experiment till all our pennies were exhausted. Nothing would induce the dog either to disgorge the penny before he had received the bun or to touch the surrendered penny afterwards.”

Father Plater had left cards the day before on the Archbishop and on the Governor, Lord Plumer. A message from the latter asked him to call that day at 10.30. He went, and was enchanted with his interview :

“Before the end of half an hour’s talk I found myself saying : ‘A great Field-Marshal. And also a great Governor and a great man.’ The talk was chiefly on educational and social matters. I was immensely struck by two things. First by Lord Plumer’s intimate knowledge of Malta. He seems to have a complete mastery of detail. He goes and sees everything for himself. Secondly, by his kindness and broad sympathy. He is devoted to the people of Malta, understands their point of view, encourages good wherever he sees it. There is nothing ‘cast iron’ about him.

“I was to see him again, to come to lunch, etc. And would I lecture to the University ? I must meet the Rector, Professor Zammit. Thence to the Archbishop, most fatherly and kind. This was Mgr. Caruana, Bishop of Malta and

Archbishop of Rhodes. He is at present making his visitation round the island. Malta at present facing a great crisis in its history. New Constitution to be introduced. Would I give courses of lectures for the next three months or so ?

"Met Dr. Zammit. Of course, I must stop for six months and join in the work of excavating Stone Age monuments. He had a large unexplored tract of country for me to dig. It was useless for me to protest that I was only in Malta for a short rest. Digging, he said, was restful, and could be varied by lecturing."¹

Meanwhile the fact that he was saying Mass at the Gesù, the University Church, caused him to meet an old friend, Mr. Leach, "the extraordinarily capable Director of the Lyceum, who knows Malta well, and is doing a great work." The Lyceum, or secondary school for some 300 boys, occupied the ground floor of the huge building, the second and third floors of which housed the University.

On the 18th he had another interview with the Archbishop, this time in the company of Dr. Counsell, who afterwards went the round of these potentates and explained the notion of a "rest cure." "So I have some faint prospect of leaving Malta alive."

Meanwhile he was meeting many interesting people who were able to give him a safe view of local conditions, like Sir Gerald Strickland, G.C.M.G., or the Marchese Mattei, whom he had known in England, and was writing home continually, now and later, sentences like this : "I sleep twelve hours a day and eat like a horse" ; "Fat and brown.

¹ Curiously, on the day on which I write this, February 20, 1922, I find in *The Times* a photograph of the Professor's Stone Age excavations.

Plenty of sleep. Sleeping like a top and eating like a horse." So will he write till the very end.

From Strada Reale to Palazzo and to museum he wanders, yet always back to the great Maltese churches, that so impressed our soldiers.

"The devotion of the people to their churches is wonderful. The men pray very earnestly. Often with outstretched hands. One sees little groups saying the Rosary together at all hours—father, mother, and children, or a little gathering of neighbours. The churches hum like a hive with prayers."

Towards the end of December Dr. Counsell had to return to England, and Father Plater moved from the hotel where he had been staying to the Casa Leone XIII, which is the hospital of the nuns of the Little Company of Mary, affectionately known everywhere as the "Blue Sisters." He arrived there on December 27, and Dr. Counsell could feel as much at his ease about him as he ever could have felt. Sister Mary Alacoque writes to me that even then Father Plater slept badly, and usually rested till late in the morning, and then went to say Mass. After breakfast he went out by himself, returning as a rule for lunch, and always by 7 p.m. His cards to England suggest that he is resting more than he actually is; they speak of a world of geraniums, oranges, and roses, and on January 16 he says to his mother that his doctor finds a great improvement in him. On the 18th he writes to Oxford that he is tempted to stay where he is till the last week of the Oxford term, when he would return to "pay tutors, etc. Tell me honestly what you all think. Am getting much sleep and rest, and am fat and brown. But blood pressure rather

obstinate. It did go up to over 230, but is down to 220 and is clearly improving . . . Am very happy here, but of course shall be glad to get back to the brethren."

Meanwhile he had made a "scheme for writing." It included articles for the *Toronto Star*, of which he says that nine are written, and of which two were on Malta. Others were to follow: Emigration and Education (this he did, in fact, write); Lord Plumer; The Ancient Race of Malta; Malta for the Maltese; The Revival of Trade (this he queries); and Labour Problems in Malta. Other articles were to be one on Catholicism in Malta, for the *Catholic Times*; on Malta and the new Constitution, for the *Dublin Review*; and four articles in diary form for the *Month*. Also he notes that the *Tablet*, the *Catholic Herald of India*, and the *Catholic Times* must have further articles.

And he was lecturing; he went to the Salesian College at Sliema and received a great welcome from the boys early in January, and I gather that he addressed groups of clergy and a group of business men, though I cannot find out any details of these addresses. He was aware that this was just the work that he should not have done; yet he accepted the grave responsibility of doing it. It is a solemn thing to decide that God wants from one a particular work—for who is necessary to God?—but if it be so decided, there is no option but it must be carried through. Father Plater, then, had decided that God was asking something quite definite from him, and he resolved to give it. He had thought it out. Before leaving England, he had asked his doctors whether, if he took a complete rest of six months, of two years even, they could promise him that at

the end he would be able to work at the old accustomed pressure. They told him No. Then and there he settled—and he told to me, and I think to others, his decision—that if he thought he perceived a call to any particular work, he would do it unless he were definitely forbidden by obedience. He went, then, to Malta without any absolute intention of resting, though ready not to overtire himself in what could not be brought under the heading of God's providential call. He never even thought he would survive. On January 12 he called on the editor of the *Daily Malta Chronicle*, with whom he had made great friends, and said to him with much simplicity that he wanted a short obituary notice only, and that "no flowers" must be added to it. This was different from his half-joking laments that he would never be allowed to leave Malta alive. If anyone seriously wished him a good recovery and many long years of work, he never would joke about it, and became grave with that sort of gravity which, as I said, precluded any further argument or even talk. This, again, is different from his hours of disheartenment, when he would say that he was "finished." I think anyone who heard him say the sort of thing I allude to will recognize what I mean.

Therefore on January 16 he went to speak to a large gathering chiefly composed of some 550 working-men at Senglea, and chose for his subject "Malta's Opportunity."

I will not quote from it. Its arguments and exhortations were not in substance other than what he had for long been urging upon England; the *Unione Leonina*, of which he urged the foundation, differed, perhaps, from the Social Guild chiefly

in this, that it was meant for Malta, and that in that Catholic island, small, though scarcely homogeneous, principles could more easily be assumed and applied than here in England.

After the lecture the *Società Cattolica Operaia* felt itself roused to a pitch of enthusiasm it had never known. Perhaps not even in Plymouth, not in Dublin, not on his dear Tyneside, had such scenes been witnessed. Charles Plater accepted the affection—for it was that—and the ovation with simple gratitude, for he felt that he had been allowed to do good. From that night's work issued the *Unione Leonina*, of which I need not print the statutes, for they are not notably different from what the C.S.G. had taught us to expect, but, once more, they display Father Plater's last constructive work, and they remain as a responsibility to the people to whom he offered it and who so enthusiastically accepted it. Happily Father Plater had good friends and allies among the Maltese laity, and among the clergy he found those who could understand the terribly grave issues with which all countries alike, their own included, are faced. To them, therefore, the future of the *Unione Leonina* remains entrusted.

"His words lit fire," Mr. Leach has written to me, "in every heart. I felt that, and I witnessed it at that meeting. Monsignor Galea, who was there with him, afterwards told me that the effect that the speech had had on the dock-yard working-men was simply astounding. They were electrified and carried away by his words, and the whole house, filled to overflowing, leapt to their feet and cheered and followed him out into the streets to shake and kiss his hands and make as much of him as ever they could. Glory be to God who vouchsafed to allow our poor people's hearts to be stirred even for so short a spell by this apostle."

The next week began as usual and only two tiny incidents emerge. On the Tuesday Father Plater got up rather later than usual, and went round to Father Gilliman for a chat, and then arranged to stay to lunch. He telephoned to the Sisters not to expect Father Plater, when only a few seconds later Father Plater in the midst of some small joke got up and stood with his eyes fixed on the ceiling. Then he said cheerfully: "Well, good-bye, old boy," and went out and returned to the hospital. This incident remains unexplained, unless perhaps you join it to the fact that the next day he said, seemingly in jest, to a hairdresser in whose saloon he was, that in a couple of days the Maltese would be giving him a grand funeral. They laughed, and forgot it till the two days had elapsed.

Thursday passed without any incident that I can find recorded, save that as he passed through the streets the little boys of the town went everywhere with him, kissing his hands and stroking his shabby sleeve. On the morning of Friday the 21st he was clearly not feeling well, since he allowed breakfast to be brought to him in bed, a practice which he always resisted as far as possible. At about nine he was called on by Mr. Leach, who had been hard at work the whole of the preceding day, translating his Senglea speech into Italian and Maltese, and duplicating copies for distribution. Father Plater was in high spirits and exclaimed, when he saw the translations, that this was "glorious work"; was full of projects which he discussed, and showed his visitor the notes of another lecture with which he was to follow up the Senglea speech on the next Sunday. He wanted it translated into Maltese. Mr. Leach said that he had heard Father Plater was intending

to leave on February 2, and begged him to stay a little longer to give substance to the work he had inaugurated. Father Plater said that he would like to stay another couple of weeks, but that it all depended on what news he got from Oxford. They shook hands, and Mr. Leach left him at 10.30. He then went out for a short walk and returned to lunch at one. He ate with a good appetite and seemed to the Sisters more cheerful even than usual. After lunch they made him rest again, as he had a talk to give that evening at the Sacred Heart Convent. During his walk he had called at the Convent of the Sacred Heart, Tal Ballut, and asked the Rev. Mother if she could take a letter for him to Valetta as it was urgent, and see to the typing of his lecture notes. He said he would return to give an instruction he had promised to the Children of Mary, at four that afternoon, and would have his tea after the talk.

Before leaving the hospital for this lecture he said to the Rev. Mother of the Blue Sisters, "Coming round for the lecture?" She said that she was busy and could not. He laughed and said, "Well, you had better make up your mind, as it will be the last time." The Sister replied that she had no scruple now in asking him to give them a lecture of their own, as, since he refused to rest, they might as well have that pleasure as well as everybody else. He laughed again, and said "All right."

At four o'clock he arrived at the Sacred Heart Convent, talked for a quarter of an hour with the Reverend Mother, and then went to the Hall, where the Association of Old Pupils awaited him.

His lecture was taken down by one of the listeners, and from these notes we can see that it was on the

insipidity of the selfish life, and the transformation worked in a soul's history by self-dedication to the service of God and one's fellow-man. He then explained the share that women would play in the new *Unione Leonina*, and allowed himself to be bombarded with the usual questions, and showed books and pamphlets to his audience.

Then he went to the parlour and took his tea, and said how much he was enjoying it. During this time the Rev. Mother and Mother Archer-Shee were with him. At the lodge, as he was going away, he said: "You don't know what a load you have lifted from my mind by sending those messages for me and having the lecture typed! I am so grateful. Now you must go in; it is so cold, and you must not risk exposing yourself." He then went away, the nun thinking how much he stooped.

The hospital of the Blue Sisters is only separated from the Sacred Heart Convent by a garden wall; he reached it about 6.40 and went up to the seamen's ward, where he had many friends whom he visited daily. One of these, a special friend, had just been discharged, and Father Plater had said to his neighbour that morning, "I must adopt you instead." He went up to speak to this man, and after a few jokes and pleasant good-nights all round the two went out together into the gallery, from which another ward was reached. In the gallery he threw his hands up to his head, and the sailor caught him as he fell. The Sisters were there in a moment, and a priest, Father Kilkenny, who was a patient in the hospital, came too, anointed him, and did all else that was possible. But, as I have heard, Father Plater lay there, smiling his half-whimsical smile, as one who should say, "I have escaped you."

The nuns at the Sacred Heart Convent had gone to say office directly Father Plater had left the lodge, and Matins were but just over when a note came asking for their prayers for Father Plater, who was dangerously sick. In a few minutes a telephone message came that he was dead. The Sisters went straight from their supper to make the Stations of the Cross for the repose of his soul. The Archbishop was telephoned to; his car was out of order, but "he hurried to the launches, hired one, and was over before we realized he could have heard."

It was originally intended that the funeral should take place directly from the Hospital, but popular devotion demanded that he should once more be seen by those who so suddenly had lost his visible companionship. On the following Sunday his coffin was taken therefore from the Hospital to Valetta, where it was put before the High Altar in the church attached to the University. This was the old Jesuit Church of Malta. At half-past two the church was opened to the public, who came in crowds to file past the coffin, which was piled with wreaths and showed, through a sheet of glass, the features of the dead priest.

At three o'clock the coffin was carried out of the church by members of the *Unione Cattolica San Giuseppe*. The pall-bearers were the committee of the *Unione Leonina*. In the procession His Excellency the Governor-General was represented by Major V. C. Micaloff, R.M.A., A.D.C., and in it followed the chapter of the Cathedral and an immense gathering of the clergy, secular and regular, members of the Council of Government, of the consular service, of educational establishments, repre-

sentatives of the professional and commercial classes of Malta ; of Army and Navy ; of the Law ; members of the National Sailors' and Firemen's Union, of the various branches of the Workers' Union in Malta, of the Malta Engineering Students, the Marine Mercantile Association, the Philharmonic Societies, the Boy Scouts, and many associations of girls and ladies from the various convents.

The procession went by way of the Strada Vescovo to the Addolorata cemetery, where the Archbishop was waiting. After the service in the church the coffin was taken to the vault belonging to the Society of Jesus, and placed near that of Father J. Strickland, with whom Father Plater had had many close links of friendship.

The Governor-General, who had already said to Dr. Counsell, " You could not have brought me a more valuable man at this epoch in the island's history," had telegraphed the news of Father Plater's death to Cardinal Bourne, and followed his telegram by this letter which I am allowed to quote :

" DEAR CARDINAL BOURNE,

" I sent you a telegram on Saturday telling you of Father Plater's sudden death here and of the widespread regret felt.

" In the short time he had been in Malta he had gained extraordinary influence, and, as I said, we all feel we have lost a very dear friend. . . .

" I believe that the seed he was able to sow here will bear good fruit and that his work during the last month will not be the least of his services to the Empire.

" I was fortunate in having had two or three conversations with him. . . ."

And from the sheaf of other letters which reached

England I quote from the following one only, written from Malta on the 24th :

“ You should have heard, as I did hear, walking close to the bier as one of the pall-bearers, all along the way from the Jesuit Church to Porta Reale—you should have heard the loving comments of the crowd all along the way and, even more touching, the vehement *Requiem Æternam* women and men alike said to him as he passed. You should have seen the crowds of working-men filling the church and following him, hustling each other in the church, bringing wreaths, crosses, loose flowers, to place on and near the bier and to have a last look, through the glass panel, at the face of the man who had literally stolen the heart from them.

“ God give rest to his soul ; we say so because we can say no better, but can one fail to feel that Father must have flown straight to Heaven into the loving embrace of Him whom he loved with a depth of love which simply gushed out of his pure, genuine nature, in all he did and said, and which made men feel and realize they had seen and heard a real apostle and a saint ? Men of the world, of most different temperaments, of widely divergent points of view, all felt the charm and the indescribable influence on them of this man of God.

Chapter XV

FIDELIS SERVUS

"The Catholic Faith, which ignores no single possibility in human feeling, and no possible flight in human idealism, produces in those who hold it truly a freshness of heart very hard to be understood by the dispassionate critic who weighs character by the newest laws . . . but never by the primeval tests of God."—MRS. CRAIGIE.

UGHT I to try even to say anything further about this life? I cannot feel sure that to do so would be better than impertinence. But on re-reading what I have so far written I feel this, at least, that even though all that can be said has, in a sense, been told, yet the intensity with which these words and doings of his affected the lives of those that he met has not been properly communicated. "If I did not know him so well," one of his friends wrote to me, "perhaps I might describe him better." I mean, as he meant, that the impression made by the man was in this case so out of proportion to the things that he said or did or that can be said about him, that no exhaustive record, no accumulated anecdotes, could possibly convey that personal impression. Anecdotes! I can remember hardly any; and then, as yet another wrote to me, anecdotes need the setting, and in Charles Plater's case "the only possible setting of anecdotes is just the huge piece of life that Charles filled for all who lived with him." "Judge him," another said to me, "by his effect on others. He is as easy to describe as a sunbeam or a spirit. *He* will elude you." What better can I do, then, at first, than to quote from some of the letters that he kept and that their writers have allowed me to make use of? They never dreamt they would be published, when they wrote them. Nor are the writers men of weak

sentiment. What they say is a direct expression of their vital reaction to Father Plater's life : had they wished to write artificially, they were not men who could have done so, or at least the artificiality would be recognized at once, and I should not have quoted them.

First, the impression was not made only on those who "asked for it," or the naturally susceptible.

"One's own affairs seem a muddle and the muddle outside one seems worse. There is only one intelligible interpretation to it all, and you were quite right ; I little thought you were the man that was going to make such interpretation real to me when first I clapped eyes on you. . . . I wasn't overpleased to see you then—I never was to see parsons. But now it gives me a genuine pleasure just to look at your photo."

"You are the most potent influence for good that I have bumped up against in my life, Father. Don't mind me saying this. I think you ought to know, for you work so hard and the effects of your tremendous efforts are not on the surface nor always show visible to cheer you on the way. But I know that my case is not peculiar, it is common. Into hundreds of meaner souls like myself in all sorts of remote corners you—and all that you symbolize to them—have struck right home. You have gone deeper than any other experience in their lives."

And from one whom he had hoped to see in a retreat, but failed to persuade to come :

"From the start I had no intention of staying. But the manner of your appeal made it so jolly hard to offer any tangible reason for not staying that the way you had me wavering both amused and embarrassed me. How you bepummelled my poor resolution ! . . . Well may your conscience prick you, Father. Fancy reducing a fellow to

having objections without reasons! And the way you made me plunge about mentally for adequate reasons was funny."

And from another, who at last did come :

"I would come to one of your soldiers' retreats—I like a soldier and I love a priest; not so very long ago I had no particular affection for either the one or the other. We change—I hope we grow.

"Your talks made me look in upon myself as never before. The sight was not an edifying one—so insignificant, so weak I seemed. . . . Every rag of respectability in which by self-deception I had rigged myself out fell off. Right through me the inspection shot cold and exacting. . . . Thank the Lord that with beautiful tenderness you led us out of this condition to look at the tremendous possibilities of good that were in the worst of us. . . . Wonderful talks, Father, wonderful, charged with your strong discerning soul they were more convincing to us than ever a thousand books could be. . . . For the first time in my life I was absolutely honest with myself. It washed me out. . . . The only words that would formulate themselves for expression were 'Oh dear, God help me.' Weakly I often wanted to come to your room just to sit quietly before your fire, to feel you near me, a tenderly strong and cheerfully confident soul. . . . Through life you shall sit close to my soul, a tremendous influence for good. Never can I rise from my knees without remembering you by asking God to give you comfort, strength, and loving helpers in the great work you have set yourself of saving souls and putting backbone and sense into the Catholic Faith in England, and that I may be granted grace to do my feeble utmost in this direction. I am trying repeatedly to stamp this end into my being till it becomes part of me.

"Heaps of impressions of the retreat return to me now, and you ride astride them all with your hand held out encouragingly and understandingly towards me."

And the response to Father Plater was made to the quietly personal and real thing that he was. He just *was* a man; he just *did* love. He did not act *as if* he loved; he did not merely tell himself he must save souls, and do what the logic of the Apostolate dictates. By a direct impetus he went straight to the thing before him, a soul, human as his was, and made by God, for God, as he was. At such moments there were three only; himself, the soul, and God.

“You came right out of your way to help me.

“No one, to my knowledge, except yourself, has ever come, or wanted to come, nearer to me than a discussion on the weather, the minimum wage, or the price of turnips would bring them.”

“Every time he came to Liverpool he came to see me. He pursued me with his kindness. I could never understand why he bestowed his friendship on me. . . . His special gift was, the way in which he seemed to throw his soul into a personal friendship with those with whom he came in contact. He gave, and asked nothing in return. All the good he did will never become known because . . . a great many of those on whom he lavished himself were not people who count according to the standard of this world.”

And if this be thought to indicate rather just the persevering kindness of a generous heart, a kindness to which it never occurred to him *not* to yield, I will recall instances of the other extreme, when he flung his full weight, not on memory or knowledge, but on that mysterious instinct by which, I suppose, grace recognizes grace—even though the grace it recognizes be but one that *has been there*, or would fain be there. Around such souls shines the love

of God. In the last years that I knew him it was not once or twice only that he told me how, on a kerbstone, in a railway carriage, he, as he passed, would see what he called "a Catholic face," unmistakable. He would yield to the impulse, accost the loiterer, enter the carriage; and within the hour the miracle would be done, and the soul absolved, and grace be at home again. So, too, I remember his meeting a detachment of sixty American cadets, not one of whom he knew. He wished to find out if any of them were Catholics and walked straight up to two of them, and asked if they were. They were; and the only two Catholics out of all the sixty. His "chance encounters," as I said, were no less providential. At the Bulldog Club he met a man returning next day to Salonika from leave. "He wanted to be a Catholic and had long done so." But he was most certainly not looking for a priest just then. Father Plater telephoned to Archbishop's House; sent for stole and holy water from a convent, spent the evening instructing him, received him into the Church at 10.50, and saw him off from his station at 11.15.

This direct, reciprocal intuition prolonged itself into no soft nor selfish affection. He never let his friends down lightly, but exacted the most and the best from them. It is true that he began gently and "humanwise." He sought for and found what good a man had in him, and thence started to build and improve.

"You humanize the Ten Commandments for me by expecting me to try to keep them. Every priest asks us to keep them, but you don't; your attitude assumes that a fellow will and that he will aim a bit higher even. That healthy influence does lift a fellow's nose out of the mud.

"I do arise at times for a time, and it is invariably the recollection of you that pulls me out by the ear . . . I have two pictures of you, Father, that sooner or later are sure to crop up when I require it. One is of you very reverently saying Mass every morning and the other is of you very heartily laughing the side-shows out of court as irrelevant."

But he could be severe, not harshly, nor repressively, but with a lovable relentlessness.

"I had almost forgot that I had let myself in for that periodical 'cut.' Your letter read so nicely till that big type hit me in the eye and made me 'sit up.' 'What are you doing, Jimmy.' Little harm and little good, Father dear, and I'm ashamed to tell you so. . . .

"I told X that in casting about for the tin-pot ideals of men there was nothing presented itself for me to aim at with roots deep enough to make me go 'bald-headed' for it. This ideal you have placed before us is surely the thing I sought without knowing if I sought at all. I want this to be it. I keep on repeating this is it. I must face it, I must tackle it. Of course, I haven't got the 'bald-headed' feeling yet, but the steel is creeping in to stiffen my resolution to make this 'passion' the 'absorbing interest' of my life. I am utilizing every crutch to help me to do it. Send me a card every month, Father, with just these words on it: 'What have you done, Jimmy?' Nothing more than this. 'What have you done?' not 'What have you refrained from doing?' . . . Do this for me, Father, please. It may sound childish, but I know best what crutches I want. There is much of the child in me, still, though hell's fumes have nearly stifled it all."

"Notwithstanding your wonderful kindness to me your influence is a spanking influence: you make me spank myself. You haven't made me a saint, but you have made it impossible for me to take pleasure in being a pig."

True to his belief that if only men *knew* better, they would *do* better, he tried always to construct ideals and to supply clear goals.

“I wasn’t very long at Oxford before I was convinced that I knew nothing. I came away realizing that many were guessing a lot, but it was precious little that anybody actually knew. I left in a mental muddle, sure of nothing, and every person I met with who spoke on anything with certainty and without qualification I wrote down as an ass. Then you came along with the idea that the Unknown was the biggest thing and the only reality worth being certain about. You came none too soon . . . everything was slipping from me but my appetite, and I was about reconciled to making bed-fellows of the pigs. Every time I sit down to write you I live that time over again and marvel at your kindness and the trouble you took then and since to deal with me.”

“The end of all my labour would appear to make it possible for my neighbour to obtain a potato or a carrot more for less than he would otherwise have to pay. I cannot use up my life with enthusiasm for such an end.”

Even so, I expect it was the sight of Father Plater’s own life that did more, at first at any rate, than sheer instruction.

“Your incessant labour dominated by the one idea makes one feel that you are ruthlessly squeezing the utmost possible out of every nerve in your body. Yet you seem to keep fat on it. You’re a wonder, Father. Upon my life I declare the thought of you is an inspiration to me. You’ll laugh at this, I know, but it’s a fact. I believe that if I could keep you at my elbow I could win Heaven with my hands in my pockets.”

In all this his own detachment survived, as I shall

emphasize, and *bred* detachment. Despite sentences like the following :—

“I could never by manner or words indicate my mental attitude to, or my regard for, you. My tongue, Father, in these things translates me badly. I know you don’t want a translation and I promise never to write like this again to you, but I had to do it this once, for I would not have you think me indifferent. Every word of it is from the roots of me, and as true as the Catholic religion,”—

his men knew how, if necessary, even to keep aloof from him :

“I made no special effort to get a confidential talk to you. I realized this week-end as never before how overwhelmed with work you must be. How on earth you bear the strain and keep smiling I cannot understand. Besides, Father, I feel I want no more intimate, no more confidential talk from you than you give us in your sermons. There you do take us into your confidence in a special way. You do not talk at us. We feel that you bring to our notice intimately what it is that influences and moulds your own life, that all you have, all you know and feel, of your own ideal you give to us. It is a great joy to be carried away by your happy assurance and feel how real the spiritual world becomes under the suggestive power of your compelling earnestness and matter-of-fact-like and convincing talks about it. I’d never tire of hearing those talks of yours. However oft repeated I think I’d get more out of them every time. I don’t want to talk to you. I want to listen to you when you are talking about the things that matter. . . . If we were alone together for an hour or two you would not talk like that. You would be glad of a rest for one thing and afraid of talking at me for another. So I really think, Father, you are never so intimate nor do we feel you so well as when in your inimitable way you have caught a group of souls together and have them hanging

on your every word. You are in fact that true friend of whom you spoke on Sunday—you are ever pointing to something higher than yourself, higher than all of us, until you have become a sort of symbol. . . . ‘Fall in and follow me because I follow HIM’ is your call, and when that call comes from you I want to come with a rush. But the work you are doing is not done with a rush and you cannot for ever be about bucking us up (worse luck). We are easily uplifted and easily cast down. Weak. But you make us realize that our weakness can be made a source of strength. That’s it. That’s just the very thing you do for me. It’s the root of your whole message for me.”

And there was no monopolizing spirit : the good thing a man had got, in Father Plater, he wanted to communicate :

“I want to say more to make your fine big heart lilt towards helping other lads like me. I hope God will whisper to you and finish what I cannot here and could not.”

The reluctant acquaintance, who felt forced by politeness to answer the letter which Father Plater had sent to him as follows :

“Thank you so much for your jolly letter. It reads like you. I think I shall *want* to write to you later”—

not only himself wrote, after some time, this :

“I want to read every scrap you have written ; send me a list of them, please”—

but caused an even more reluctant friend to feel the same, and elicited from him this little postscript which must have given great happiness to the priest when he read it :

“I have no time to write further ; send this letter to Father Plater and tell him to write clearly so a poor chap

like me with coal dust in his eyes may read easily. I can make out his writing with a struggle, when I have an idea of the subject."

What his letters meant, may be gathered from the following :

"I have always prayed fervently for you and cherished the kindly letters you wrote to me ; you don't know how I regard them. I have read and re-read them hundreds of times ; I always carry them about with me . . . I know you hold the key to my future happiness."

It may be thought by now that such letters came only from the uncritical. Indeed, I heard it boldly said by a professor, when the University began to fill up again, that Father Plater would not like the undergraduates as much as Oxford's war-time population, because they would not accept him at his own valuation. It is true that the letters I have so far quoted were written by men whose education would be called imperfect, and from an academic point of view, was so. But are such men bad critics ? I do not think so. An education which sophisticates, which renders so fastidious as to make a man exclusive ; which so refines the perceptions, multiplies points of view, as to weaken or inhibit the power of decision ; which complicates the mind so as to confuse or make impossible true intuition ; which does not so much control passion as dilute it, is a very bad education for getting to know the world. And while it may sneer away romance, it will most certainly not make sentimental friendships any the less prevalent. On the other hand, having to work hard for your food, having to do without the delicacies and graces of life, having to confront men as they are with the man you are yourself, can be a

very excellent education in many ways. Even the "illiterate" can be, and often are, very good judges of others and even of themselves. They do not give their affection feebly, but neither do they give it lightly. I would trust the judgment, and I would value the affection, of men like those who wrote the letters I have quoted, without any hesitation. Not for nothing did such men, when on leave or after demobilization, return when they could to Father Plater's house. And men who did not habitually talk of being "happy" would many a time write thus :

"To say that I was pleased to be at Campion Hall would say something which is far from the truth. I was *happy* there. More than that I could not say if I were to write 20 pages on it."

After Father Plater's death, however, Mr. Clutton Brock, whose critical gifts are not likely to be disputed, wrote to Campion Hall a letter which he kindly allows me to quote :

"When I first met him at Swanwick, I seemed to know him at once, and afterwards he was always the same, only more delightful ; there was no monotony in his sameness, and one could not exhaust it. There was no vanity in my enjoyment of him, for, if he liked me, I knew that he liked everyone ; he made his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and this made the enjoyment greater.

"Once, I remember, he did express to me his dislike of the back of a Protestant minister ; but I do not think he could have disliked his face, though it was even uglier.

"I am often afraid of Jesuits because they are so completely bachelors ; their perfection is that of an austere spiritual club, and I am more at home in makeshift married imperfection. But Father Plater, with all that perfection,

was like a married father, and a child, and a brother, and I was never afraid of him.

"I speak of him almost with laughter as if he were still alive, as he is . . . I was a heretic, but there was nothing in his heart or mind that he could conceal from anyone; he was all one, conscious and unconscious, in the richness of his good-will. I think he made little distinction between most human beings and Jimmy, who was a kind of fantasy of human nature that he took about with him and loved. The last time I saw him I thought that he was dying and knew it, yet I was not more sad than he was; his immortal reality mastered me then as it does now; only he seemed more beautiful and I knew that he was a saint. I suppose he had faults, but he made all faults seem like the ugliness of Jimmy; he was a kind of God's advocate for human kind, and all kind, and at the end of writing this letter I see that my real aim in writing it is to give thanks for him."

And from a scholar who, for many years of his life, had been "bitterly"—it is his own word—anti-Catholic:

"His presence besets me, for he was one beside whom I felt an instinctive desire to kneel, to be able to share in his acts of repentance, awe, and admiration. . . . In this iron age he helped me to guard against a callous or cynical view of things. . . . I had said bitter things of his and your Society, and my acquaintance with him opened my eyes to my lack of charity and taught me that if there have been evil Jesuits it was probably that they set at naught the ideals of their own order."

Once more, from a man of European reputation, who weighed his words as befitted one who had the highest possible standard of intellectual probity and spiritual experience:

"I did not come to him with my special problems as

they arise out of my work. Yet he did for me a thing which I felt to be noble-minded, perhaps difficult, certainly a thing which did me solid good : he trusted me. This is pleasant from any quarter that one can and does respect at all . . . and if I felt this, how many other men, of the most various characters and Catholic and non-Catholic appurtenance, must have felt so, indeed I know did feel so ! He was admirably in place at Campion Hall ; a man charmingly human, tactful, and wise, and an utterly devoted Religious."

And lest, by law of contrary, it be unjustly surmised that this letter is consciously "composed," I will add one more quite certainly spontaneous quotation from a letter written by a Labour Member of Parliament :

"The photo shall be treasured in my home, and when I am tired it will be a means of refreshing my faith in God and man to look at the likeness of this good man, whose peaceful strong face bears upon it the stamp of the serene sweet soul that was his . . . I shall never forget that summer's evening spent in the deep shade of the college garden, when we talked of many things about which men speak too seldom in these testing times. . . . His humility, his charity, and his great love for mankind soothed and strengthened one so that men and life were seen from another angle. The narrow judgment, the unjust thought, and the half bitter word were banished before the rays of his beautiful sunny spirit, and vision was given in exchange for petty opinion. . . . As his sunny spirit towards men banished their gloom and doubt, so he too as a man of childlike mind gathered strength from the new possibilities and powers men found within their souls in his presence. Though he suffered pain physically, yet I think his road through life must have been one long journey to Emmaus, for material things did not blur his vision of the Divinity that is in us and around us."

This, then, is what was thought of Father Plater by those to whom he had made an intimate approach, and it is always more valuable to see the best that people think of a man than the worst. For human nature is always truer to itself when it loves than when it hates.

I should like to ask now what Father Plater thought of these very men who so loved him.

I have quoted one opinion which will have astonished my readers. It is that Father Plater lacked altogether the deeper depths of feeling. If his arm went affectionately round the neck of some wounded soldier to whom he was talking, it would go no less affectionately round that of the next man he met. "This was not insincerity, for he gave all he could to each, and to all he gave all but himself." Again, "he *spent* himself on that to which he could not *give* himself." For the true, rare human relationship he "substituted work," and consoled himself "for his inability to give more by adjusting himself to the old doctrine that you must not give to man what is God's alone. At best he loved others *because* of God."

From other recorded opinions it is clear that it might be felt that "you never reached his innermost." That is true. The only question really is, how deep within him was that innermost, and what was really there, whether or no you reached it. Was it the heroic, the divine; or was it just a *lack*, a lack of something human, a lack that left him wistful, unsure of himself; unready to fight, as being not absolutely certain that he possessed the really real?

In the Preface to this book I said that we would try to see Charles Plater as one who developed,

who was not perfect from the outset and perhaps was not perfect at the end.

Let us, then, begin in saying that in this very sphere of his neighbour, of work for him, and of love for him, he *grew*. There were in him from the beginning what I might call the cold element and the hot element. The latter was the most easily noticeable. He effervesced ; he—as he said himself—gushed. People found it hard to suppose that this very demonstrative amiability was sincere, or at any rate deep. His smile was often mechanical, even to the end, at least when he was tired. Indeed, he imitated himself at such hours ; he had, as it were, learned by heart what paces he performed when he could be spontaneous, and he repeated them very well when he could be only automatic or calculated. Again, long after he wrote what I quoted about softness, desire to be petted, to be made much of, he went on in his notes accusing himself of sensuality, by which he meant taking a merely natural satisfaction from liking and being liked, and from the manifestation of friendship. I suppose that when a man with that temperament is very tired, the effort to take supernatural delight in the beauty of human friendship is very difficult indeed ; an unscrupulous man would let himself slip into low and lower forms of self-refreshment, while a man who lived merely in the fear of doing wrong would cut off all the outside and inside occasions of possibly doing or feeling the less good things, and become frozen interiorly and petrified outside. In 1898 Charles wrote that when reading the “ Idylls of the King ” he cried over *Guinevere*, was carried away by *Elaine*, and knew the *Passing of Arthur* almost by heart ; and he proceeded to observe that

wit was the "mark of a cold clear mind. It is frigid and classical. *Libera nos, Domine!*" All the way through there remained in him the possibility of thoroughly selfish satisfaction in affection received from his fellow-men.

There was also all the time the possibility of regarding them as to be "exploited," "used"; and this is what people saw much more readily and often resented. He knew it, too; here I will only add that his spiritual notes corroborate this; and so do the conversations upon this sort of thing which, during his last year or two, I had with him.

Well, when this or that is a real possibility to a man, when it is easier for him to act or feel thus and thus, than not, it is inevitable that in a life taken as a whole, those possibilities will be sometimes realized, those tendencies will express themselves; nor ought we to think ill of the man for that. On the contrary, how well we ought to think of him if, without killing them, he so manages them as to eliminate the less good, and to leave only the pure gold. When I came to Oxford for the second time, I seemed to notice that he had gone very far towards accomplishing this. I dare say that the torrent of friendship that submerged him during the war caused him to run formidable risks of sentimentality once more, especially as he was then terribly tired and tempted in consequence to lapse into accepting consolations. But he did not succumb on that side, though on the other I have certainly heard it said that he could not possibly like soldiers and dockers and miners as much as he seemed to. He could and did; there was now no "exploiting"; it was almost tragically genuine. He loved and suffered with those who, he saw, were suffering and who

loved him ; and he realized increasingly that there was no human way of succouring them as he would have wished, and this threw him back more and more completely on the supernatural and the love of God.

Miss Fletcher, who knew him well at Oxford and before, has told me how, despite his determination to get through all barriers to reach the heart and soul, yet, quite at the beginning of his rectorate at Oxford he made it very clear he would have no "admirer cohort" ; he asked, even, to be told how to keep people at arm's length, when that was right ; and she smiled to see how he could defeat that sort of "playful coquetry" which may torment a priest, without being rude or churlish. She insists—and I have heard many others quite rightly insist—on the extraordinary impression of asceticism that he produced. There was a certain aloofness ; you did not get the whole man to give himself over ; first and foremost he was a priest of God. And another friend tells me how he never flattered, but, when speaking as director, so to say, would frankly observe : "This is education—that is heredity" ; and thus leave the personal element in a good deed perhaps less large than at first it had looked, but at least more defined and more trustworthy. He would, too, come to the point with extreme rapidity and all but ruthlessness : "I know all you think, and you know what I think, so let us get to business." He never wrote, this informant tells me, when he could speak ; and he never spoke if he could *do*. His encouragement was just the brief word *Prosit* : "And now, when work is dull, I always write *Prosit* at the top of the page, and that is good enough." And I hear from the same source of his "almost savage

insistence" on the highest of possible motives and ideals.

Surely, then, the responsibility of being Rector, the war, the enormous increase of his work, and the grace of God which through his illness was preparing him to die, had really purified all that was selfish in his affection for his fellows, and thus he was able at the last to do homage of a simple, joyous, direct, and grateful sort to God in them. His service went straight to the God-indwelt man. He did not cease to see the human limitations and the failures, but he felt as though the man who fell short and who failed was really *suffering*, even unwillingly, from his own sins or disabilities, and he enveloped him in a divine pity which was grave and hopeful and tender all in one. This was one of the great changes which I thought I noticed in Father Plater during the months in which he was giving up life; and though it is true that I have reflected on it since, I do not think that I have altered my memories so as to falsify them, owing to my now understanding that Father Plater was dying and must in any case have been, during that time, under the special solicitation of God.

His friends may therefore feel quite sure that he loved them with a wholly warm, sincere, personal, and yet wise and spiritual love.

I have said that at first, when he was not properly known, absorption in his own affairs made him absent-minded and apparently selfish. This, too, decreased. He was, when younger, laboriously thoughtful for others, but afterwards spontaneously so. His friends could accumulate details to illustrate this, and I will only add the following as characteristic.

At Tullabeg, when he went away, he always told

his Mass server that he was going and when he was to be expected back, for fear that the server should be wondering next morning where he was and looking for him. But an absent-mindedness remained in which there was a predominating dose of sheer fatigue. He was always saying that his head was addled, and that he could not think two thoughts coherently. At Tullabeg, once more, it was his turn, on a certain day, to say grace. He went to sleep during dinner, woke up when everybody rose, and stood silent while they waited for him to begin the grace. He turned to his neighbour and said with a dreamy smile: "Evidently the man whose turn it is to say grace has forgotten." But what seems to me quite important is that he was often trying unconsciously to think of several things at the same time, and one thought, as it were, knocked the other out. In this he was rather like Father Robert Monteith, who was an extraordinary genius, and whose subconscious trains of thought, so to label them, were so strong that they interfered violently with his conscious mind, and the result was so bewildering to him that he feared for himself downright insanity. His head seemed bursting with ideas of which not one could properly express itself. But Father Plater was all the time trying to think about some definite and chosen topic, which confused his attention to outside reality; and what began in youth by being a sort of excited interest in a thousand things, ended by being effortful concentration on one thing, and though the results seemed much the same the element of selfishness had long been strained out of him. Also, he was very often praying, and held his rosary in his pocket and said it in the streets.

His increasing unselfishness is visible, too; his ever more gentle wittiness. He had asked that he should be delivered from wit as being "classical and cold." In spite of that he was always very witty, though not always with equal success. When he was at Oxford as an undergraduate his Rector said to him that he had been reading the Life of Bismarck by Busch, and that Busch made him out to be a better man than one might have expected. "But *good wine*," said Charles Plater in a flash, "needs no Bush." And, again, the undergraduates were speaking of Archdeacon Furse, now Bishop of Bularwayo, who took a great interest in our rowing. "Furse?" exclaimed the Rector, "what a curious name!" "Yes," said Plater, "it *is* a name out of the Common." And it was now that he described the Anglican book called *Contentio Veritatis* as "Straining the Truth." But apart from my being unable to remember this sort of anecdote by heart, I always felt that this flashing wittiness was what almost frightened people off Charles Plater, and also what made him feel that he ought to play up to his reputation, and consequently strain his points somewhat at times. Conversation was not so snapped by his sheer absurdities, which were provocative and led to repartee. He would talk the most perfect nonsense when he was "in form," and had above all the power of safeguarding himself when he had been caught up on the gale of some real inspiration and was accordingly afraid he had been "rhetorical." He would pass abruptly from an ecstatic outburst to what someone called "idiotic flippancy." It was a very good form of bluff, and prevented any too great rarification of the atmosphere. More permanent was his geniality, his ready smile, and the ease with

which he passed off a situation with a gentle little joke. He was coming back in the dark from night prayers in a private chapel, when he fell over an invisible wall in the terraced garden. He was really hurt by the fall, but after Mass next day refused obstinately to say more than that he had never realized how many genuflections Mass involved. And when he wanted to convey, say to a Reverend Mother, that he did not need an offered medicine, he would hand back the unopened bottle, but with an enchanting poem hymning the virtues of the drug. He wrote to Mr. Devas that the proper way to convey home truths was in the guise of edifying examples, and that one should indicate our neighbour's shortcomings by insisting on yet other people's virtues. But I am not sure that the diminution in his "comicality," to use a second-rate word, was wholly due to fatigue or even to years. He remained as ready as ever to help the situation through with a smile, but less often with a laugh. It is true that during his last journey I expect he laughed much and healthfully; but in England, at any rate, as quoted, pity and wisdom were swallowing up even his sense of humour; he laughed not at all, it has been said, with his eyes, but with his lips only; and when he could not even smile, the strangeness of this was such that he might even be misunderstood and thought to be disapproving, if not rebuking. You were shocked, so to say, by the absence of a smile in Father Plater.

To pass to what concerned him yet more personally.

Perhaps the comment upon Charles Plater which to readers of this book may have seemed strangest of all, was Father Considine's when he said that his

novice's worst danger was a certain narrowness, a shutting up of the soul, and that his need was to shake out more sail. Father Plater did not forget this wise direction, and though you may gather that from his life as a whole, yet there is one page in his notes that shows that he was consciously acting on what Father Considine meant.

The book from which it is taken is that in which he put the notes of his long retreats made at Manresa in 1894. But what I quote was added to the novitiate notes, which are little more than a very full synopsis of Father Considine's own "points." The additions were made in 1908, at the head of the pages that contain the meditations of the "fourth week," or the concluding part of the Exercises, occupied with reflections on the resurrection of Our Lord and the indwelling of the Love of God.

"The Fourth Week is usually crowded into a very small space at our Retreats. This year only a single meditation was given to it. So in 1902. In 1903 (Louvain) a whole day was given to it. In 1904, again, only one meditation. (Father Considine, I think, generally gives four meditations to it. And, I think, very wisely.) It seems to me to be a very important part of the Exercises, and it is surely a pity to crowd it out. Its place in relation to the whole scheme of the Exercises needs to be worked out, and its 'atmosphere' to be made part of our lives.

"I find in myself a danger of 'slacking off' on the last day—less careful about silence, distraction, etc. . . . a great pity. Saint Ignatius tells us to be joyous and happy—but we are fools if we miss his meaning and take our pleasure in distracting trifles. . . . The sentiment which he wishes us to have is not less, but even much more un-earthly, spiritual, detached than the sentiment proper to the other weeks. It is not a gravitating back to the old

self-indulgence that is wanted: but an unselfish joy, full of faith and manliness.

"I sometimes feel another obstacle to making the most of this week. . . . Here have I been 'muck-raking' for a week—getting a sight of my own rottenness and knowing that the reality is much worse. Contrition—yes, thank God—I hope I've got that. I can say the *Sume et suscipe* with all my heart. But I feel sore and bruised all over, and want to go on saying the *Miserere* and the *De profundis*. *Amplius lava me* is all my cry. Don't ask me to be thinking of rewards. Heaven a consolation? Christ has entered into His Glory—thanks be to God. Don't ask me to follow even in imagination. I just want to go on doing His will and bearing His cross and trying to make myself less unfit for His service.

"Of course this is all wrong. But the feeling persists in a half subconscious kind of way. One feels shy and awkward in the Fourth Week. . . .

"This is merely my old enemy SELF cropping up. . . . It's Our Lord's triumph and glory that ought to be making me happy—not my own. If I loved Him more I should be so delighted at His glory that I should forget all my own concerns—even my sins. (He has heavily underlined elsewhere, 'We all think a lot too much about our sins,' and added, '*Ipsissima verba Patris Considine*.')

"I have not the true spirit of penance. Look at St. Peter and St. Mary Magdalene running about like children—no misgivings—'He is risen' and that is enough. Alleluia! No stopping to ask 'Where do I come in?'

"So do work hard at the Fourth Week. We all expand under the influence of unselfish joy. It makes us do our work well and easily. Enthusiasm for another, hero-worship—these carry us on to sanctity before we know it. . . . If Our Lord tells you to rejoice—well, do as you are told and trust Him."

Owing to this increasing power of freedom, Father Plater's directly spiritual life became as simple as

all the rest of his life really was. He could absorb himself in prayer, and you had only to see him after Mass to know that he was unconscious of what passed outside himself. He would kneel with his head hanging forward, looking, dare I say, half-stunned, and sometimes unable to recover himself properly for some time after his thanksgiving. But as a rule, he was able, as people of genuine faith are, or should be, to pass with the utmost directness from prayer to ordinary life and indeed to jest. I have no doubt that he could pray happily in a cinema, and equally it was clear that he did not feel it was somehow disrespectful to behave normally too soon after being in the chapel or at meditation. He believed that he was pleasing God by being his jolly self during the day, and he did not see why he should displease God by beginning at once to be what he was going to be. As far as I could judge, his prayer was either the most naive prayer of petition, or else a wordless astonishment in the presence of God and of divine things. He did not want to talk about things that were directly *worship*, one's direct communication with God. No words could expand what he saw in the simple words, God, Jesus, Mary, *credo*, I adore. He would talk very interestingly and with enthusiasm about theology, because that was the intellectual system that dealt with divine things, and not the thing itself. He would also speak with conviction about the *service* of God, especially to those who were unaccustomed, perhaps, to thinking of God and the things of God in themselves. But for himself, he did not want to do much talking. He took certain things for granted, and the rest he felt were rather disguised than revealed by talk. He never had a confused mind about himself. He asked with great

simplicity for sanction *not* to do things he thought he could not do, and for the rest followed what he felt to be the call of God to do the utmost possible. In his whole-heartedness he never thought that anyone would tell him not to do the utmost ; if I thought it was at least probable that he ought to do a thing, I never tried to prevent him, believing that God meant him to do a great deal—even a great deal of external work. I had no doubt that God might quite probably mean him to wear himself out in the way he did, and perhaps the upshot of his life proved that such was indeed God's plan for him in particular. He had, seemingly, well realized St. Ignatius's ideal of impartiality with regard to long life or short : he did not feel that he had to contemplate habitually the likelihood of a long and crippling illness ; he did not exclude the idea, but he did not think it was likely to be his own destiny, and so he did not think much explicitly about it. As to this work or that, he always had so much that he never felt that the cessation of one kind of work, or its prohibition, would leave him idle or even puzzled as to what to do next. Had you known him well, you might almost have thought him fatalist, or even heartless, so simply would he accept disappointments, or departures of friends and fellow-workers. I told him once how lost I felt each time a group of cadets or hospital men went away. "God will give you something else," he answered. "Provided you don't resist the *next thing*," he said another time, "I shall never give you any orders." I have no doubt that his faith was such that he held that God would not leave a man without the proper work to do ; there was bound to be a "next thing" that God intended to be done. To work under such

a superior was undoubtedly a great stimulus to live as far as might be in a spirit of faith. When he did give his sanction to what one asked for, he did not do so without reflection, and his refusals were no less careful, and never unkindly. Without claiming for him anything I should not, I have already given some examples that show that God directly helped one who approached Him for help with such simplicity. I have found more than two or three priests who, during the war, had resolved to say Mass for a special soldier on a certain day, or, moved by I know not what impulse, said it for him on some uncalculated date, and found, later, that that was the day and even hour when he was killed and needed that supreme assistance as never at any other time. That, not seldom, was Father Plater's experience. And once, he was saying Mass in a very large church, on Easter Day, and forgot to consecrate a second ciborium which had been prepared. In despair, he asked a priest who was there what he had better do. The priest hesitated. Father Plater broke in half all the Hosts that were already consecrated, and then, just as he was going to give Communion, turned back and broke the Benediction Host in four. He found that thus he had obtained exactly the number of Particles required to give Communion to the vast congregation that came to the rails, and whose numbers he had had no means of even guessing. So eager is Our Lord that His people should be fed, and that not one should go defrauded. And so simple is it that His Will should be achieved if only His servants leave themselves whole-heartedly to His care.

His prayer, then, was very simple : he asked for what he wanted, and I do not doubt that his prayer

was answered, often as he hoped, and always beyond what he at the time desired. It became almost humorous to see, as on reflection we sometimes could, how disastrous it would have been had the first prayed-for plan been realized, and how the only right thing was exactly what had been allowed to happen. And, feeling that his own petition was too weak, and since Our Lord asks for associated prayer, he would spend hours writing to this side and to that, to convents, to clubs, to friends, to obtain their prayers, too, along with his own.

I think that the effects of this simple and trustful habit of mind were very visible in Father Plater's life, or at least were the true explanation of what might else have been put down to temperament, to something just happy-go-lucky, or unconventional, or even "unrecollected," in his nature.

Father Plater was by no means a man who thought little or lightly of sin. Whatever might be his gentleness towards others, and his talent for finding excuses, or at any rate his insistence rather on going on to do the next right thing than brooding over the last wrong thing, he was very deeply impressed indeed by what he thought his infidelities to God's grace, and by the appalling fear that he, a priest, might be doing harm to others, or at least not doing them all the good God meant him to be doing. He had an overwhelming idea of the priesthood ; it was a terrible thought that a priest might allow personal preferences in education, nationality, politics, locality, what not, to interfere for one moment with his service of souls. There was no country in which, I suppose, he did not see tendencies that he disliked, or thought to be less good, but I never, for example,

remember his uttering during the war one uncharitable word against those whom England was fighting. It was heartbreaking to him that there should exist Catholics with whom he and we could not be in whole-hearted co-operation, and while he would say little of what he thought of the political rights and wrongs involved in the disputes between England and Ireland, his very soul bled to see that subordinate considerations interfered, in the concrete, with united Catholic work for the only thing that to him, in the long run, mattered at all. It was, then, as spoiling his work as a priest that he often viewed his faults ; socially, so to speak ; not that he failed to regard them first and deepest as grieving and offending God ; but what terrified him was that he might be a source of death, not life, to the world to save which God was calling him.

With regard to God, then, he felt that God was so much more good than he himself was or even could be bad, that he concentrated almost wholly on the astounding manifestations of the good-will of God towards men as revealed by the full Catholic supernatural doctrine of the Incarnation and its consequences. He thought of Our Lord not chiefly as having lived or as having issued orders and given an example, but as really united to him and as actually living in him by grace. He did not really reach full appreciation of this till he did his theology, and, as I said, the professor who helped him in this matter deserves the undying thanks of many souls. He lived on the knowledge of Christ in his heart ; of his own incorporation with Christ, and of the indwelling in him of the Holy Ghost. In consequence he could go about relying on exactly that ; not having to imagine Christ, to recall Him, to pray to Him as at a

distance, but as living in him, so that he could act quite simply through Christ, and put forth a supernaturalized activity which ought to have the power of Christ Himself. Hence his intense devotion to Mass and to Communion, to the means of Grace and the constant administration of the Sacraments, to the practice of supernaturalizing an intention by uniting it to the intentions of the Sacred Heart, and to the doctrine of supernatural merit. He really did solve for the most part the problem, which Mère de Soubiran said she found so hard, of harmonizing the two truths—"I can do nothing"; and "I can do all things."

It was on this, too, that his deep humility was founded. It showed itself in contradictory ways, perhaps. He never had the least intention of trying to do what he knew was congenitally impossible to him. When he did attempt, as it were under compulsion, to preach the correct sort of sermon, he failed; indeed, some think that his sermons were as a rule unsuccessful. He liked instructions better than set sermons, and best of all what he called a "talk." But that did not prevent his most simply asking all sorts of people what his main faults in the pulpit were, and when he thought they did not arise from something really co-natural to him and therefore irreformable, he tried to take the advice. Nor was he a man who felt "As to *how* I talk, I will accept advice; but talk I must." He was always ready to stand down, or efface himself, as once at Preston, in 1917, I think, when he was down to speak at a C.S.G. Conference, and someone else got up and did the talking, and he, afterwards, just laughed and said that it was nothing. On the other hand, that did not prevent him, when advertising was

called for, being quite determined that it should be done thoroughly.

Do not suppose me to mean that he never felt the instinct to take offence, to be hurt by snubs, to be depressed by rebuffs. Nor even that he never had the temptation to do the work that flattered, or that interested; to "shove himself forward," to enjoy his careering successes, his "star turns." Again and again, Father Plater was a radically simple man, and these instincts and tendencies are simply the expression of human nature which is bound to preserve, assert, and extend itself. But he was so quick to see that these things were so very unimportant compared to the real desire of serving God that he had in him, compared to the real love for Christ that constrained him, that he could say almost unconcernedly—"Well, that is *I*. I know I am that sort of person. Who cares? Is Christ's work going to be interfered with by me? By my me-ness and its absurdities? Certainly not"—and he went ahead. That was like St. Bernard, who, when he felt conceited in the middle of a well-preached sermon, said to the tempter: "I didn't begin for you, and I certainly shall not stop for you."

Connected with his sense of what a priest existed for and ought to be, came, I think, much that made him get on so happily with all kinds of priests alike and laymen. It never occurred to him, until something forced it on him, that there could be rivalries or suspicions. In one sense he never forgot he was a priest, and in another he never remembered it. He saw before him a human creature and went straight towards him: he never felt he had to stand upon his dignity; it never occurred to him to adopt a special voice or phraseology. Nor did the layman

ever make a mistake. It never crossed his mind that Father Plater was anything but a fellow-man ; and yet no one took liberties or thought that Father Plater stood for anything less high than what he really did stand for. And with his fellow-clergy, he never expected anything but friendly and even eager co-operation—I mean exactly that: *co-operation*. He thought he could do certain things ; he knew others could do other things ; he never dreamed that anyone would hesitate to pool resources and to combine forces, and to work together for the only thing worth working for. And, thank God, people are on the whole what you take them to be. It is the part of a man of decent experience to entertain no romantic foolishnesses (as one who should suppose that no public schoolboy ever told a lie), and yet to be quite clear that the fund of goodness in men is very great, and that all men really seek the best thing under very odd disguises, and that the real difficulty for an Apostle is not, Why do people not love God ? but, Why do they not love Him very much better ? So Father Plater went through life, not harbouring fantastic dreams, wooing disappointments, but expecting, detecting, eliciting, welcoming, and working with a lot of good in nearly everybody, and doing it homage and winning its homage. He had few illusions ; but to assume that human nature is very good, and far better than it thinks, is no illusion. He traded on that belief, and it was no effort to him to do so, because though he was as shrewd as you will, he was no caricature of his own shrewdness, and therefore was no cynic. He had nothing of the cynic in him. Even when he saw through all the pretences, even his own second-ratenesses, he never became in the very least radically

second-rate, and therefore not cynical, than which nothing more second-rate can be thought of.

But what has struck me more than this or that in Father Plater, what the reading of diary after diary, notebook after notebook, has impressed for ever on me, in his perseverance. Never once, that I can see, did he falter. He was ready to relinquish all his social work at the voice of superiors, but that was because he was persevering in the vow of obedience he had taken. No disappointment or rebuff, no check from within the Society or without, ever made him even think of giving up. From the beginning to end, he was animated by one spirit, undoubtedly God's spirit. In his room, in the chapel, in train, in Army hut, or lecture-room, in tenement, in retreat-house, the same vocation is being responded to by him. No mood, even, no temperamental storm, no stagnation of the nerves, no gusts of idealism, no sickness of hope deferred, no spiritual "fogs," as he called them, fain to extinguish faith, ever altered his steady movement towards "the one believed-in thing." This is an astonishing fact, worthy of admiration in our days of drift and of swaying, floating wish. Throughout his life he was "taking the shape of Christ."

Father Plater was not a man who had leisure or even inclination for retrospect. But he did better than muse merely on the past. What had been good in it, he kept. He did not peer back with any modern melancholy and idle envy to the days when he "sat in corners," a dark-suited little boy, and "pondered," and asked his naive questions about God. The simple love of God, proper to those days, and the intimate love of mother, sister, brothers, he kept fresh and even made more intimate and wise,

till the end. He never grew away from God's first gift of human love and relationship. He did not sigh over the zest and the thrill of exploration that belongs to healthy schooldays, and say with Stevenson, "Could that boy be I?" "All that was gay," grieved the poet, "all that was fair, all that was me, is gone." Charles Plater carried Stonyhurst on into life with him; it was not only that he kept gratitude in his mind for what it had done for him, and thought it a good school that he was glad to recommend to others; nor even that he loved its very towers, its corridors, its avenues, and woods, the fells above it, and the incomparable view that sweeps away to Pendle; but he had kept uninjured the good thing that was begun in him there; he had admitted no poison; "*Carolus Hic Noster*" had not grown up self-centred, overbearing, flashy, or destined to a mind middle-aged before its time; the friends up there, on the fells, in the villages, found him unspoilt, as cheery, more tender, still boyish, and priestly, too, till the last summers came. What had been best at Stonyhurst he had carried to Manresa, and again, while he never dreamed himself back into a novitiate transfigured, idealized, he loved the gaunt, grave house, where for the first time he told himself that now in reality he had "begun," and he went back and back to it to plunge himself into the austere refreshment of retreat. Terrified at the sight of what he might be, which his first retreats there had shown him, he had not yielded to the terror, nor shut himself up away from fellow-men and even from the use of talents seen as dangerous; but, under that wise guidance of Father Considine, had flung his sails wide to the winds he had been shown were God's. What there

he had received he kept, and kept so as to increase and traffic with it; all through the years of St. Mary Hall and of Oxford, the power of principles reiterated at Manresa is discernible in him; the very incidents that so affected him at Oxford would not have produced the effect they did save on a mind and will substantially unself-seeking, generous, and opened by wise doctrine to all fine inspirations. At Oxford the double weakness was already nearly healed, the "softness" was what he first learned to convert, and to make into true sympathy; and the haste, the intolerance, the value set on bulk and mass were, when Oxford had done with him, in so far as they survived, mere passing distortions of a sturdy spirit rapidly growing into its true congenial forms, its only due outline and direction. To Stonyhurst he returned and made fine but fumbling efforts, was rebuffed more than once, and met grave misunderstandings on the part of those who either did not know that time must be given to judge a spirit aright, or who could not yet discern that there was good being dreamed and done by the ardent young professor. All that was true and formative, Charles Plater extracted from this period, too, when his first real creative efforts were testing the worth of their fibre and their force. What froze, what might have stunted, he passed uninjured through, and from the love he won, the glad, admiring enthusiasms he provoked, he derived just an associated power that enabled him to work more and more largely for God. St. Beuno's came, and with it the second of his three great transformations. Oxford had profoundly chastened yet expanded his ideals; St. Beuno's, who can doubt, purified them far more strangely still; the difference between Charles

Plater unordained and as a priest is so great that you may judge how much good the man, who never lost anything of good, had gained.

What henceforward altered him ? The existence of the Catholic Social Guild, and his consequent association with so many who were working for the same high things and felt as he did the urgency of the need of his suffering fellow-men ? No doubt. He must have been grateful all his life for what the Guild, to which he gave so much, had done, on its side, for him. How many a priest has been put to the blush by the sight of what the laity do for God ! What heroic work, done when the day's necessary toil might warrant mere repose ! What purity of intention, when every distraction, every illusion confuses the eye and subtly woos the heart ! What strange secrets, known to God and the confessional alone, or to some friend such as Father Plater was to so many, which, if revealed, would show the grace of God flowering in exquisite ways in places that seemed so barren ! The desert blossoms ever as the rose, could but the eye discern that spiritual beauty. A fragrance floats by you, a flash of glory bewilders you on a sudden ; you should surmise that God is triumphing in the soul of some labourer, some soldier, or some schoolboy, some woman of the gay and heedless world ; but until you can communicate, as his widespread work enabled him to, with these people in the intimacy of their hearts, you do not know what are the hidden miracles of grace. Once seen, they will prevent you ever thinking lightly of the world again, and shame you into efforts which hitherto you had not expected from your languor.

But still I do not think that it was this that deep-

ened Father Plater daily, so much as that at last he could give the retreats that so far he could but recommend. They were, such had always been his faith, his "life-work." So he declared long before he could do more than labour for their beginning. But when he gave them, each one was to him a new revelation, and each proved to him without possibility of error that they were the divinely willed instrument for saving souls—I do not merely mean for saving them from sin and hell, but for saving and developing the unimaginable possibilities of good, of heroic good, that are latent in nearly all men. He walked in the strength of a retreat many days; he drew life from the jets of spiritual vitality that leapt from the souls of those whom he there encountered; he was sure that were his own vitality to flag, he could scarcely do better than give a retreat to men who without any doubt would become the harp from which Mary should strike the music of her ever new Magnificat, wine that should make glad the Heart of God Himself, bread for Christ to transubstantiate; who should not only receive into themselves the imprint of Christ's Name, but who should offer to His acceptance His own "New Name," inasmuch as He, through men incorporate with Himself, grows ever towards His perfect stature, as yet but half achieved, the fulfilment of Him who "fulfils Himself in all things."

Father Plater came back to Oxford, and it might have seemed to him that he had never left it, so does a fierce activity, like his, annul the sense of time. As Rector, did he feel himself *at* Oxford? I do not know. At intervals, he had the mental leisure to realize the loveliness of towers and trees and water; perhaps, on early summer mornings the

delicate dawn that transfigures the High or the broad street before his house, the air of amber and opal in which the city floats, reached his tired senses and made him feel in Nature the presence of the God whom, under yet other veils, he at those hours was carrying to the sick ; perhaps on the river with his friends he had time to recapture something of the strange friendliness that is so special to that city and its world, and that long ago he had associated with the willows and the lashers and the fields. I like to think that at least from time to time he could feel those gifts of the place, and was not just physically there. I fear that for the most part he had "too much to do." He sacrificed the rest. He did not scorn it. Perhaps he looked a little wistfully, now and again, towards it ; but he knew that to delay upon it was not for him.

Pain had been already a strong element in his life ; the negative pain, at any rate, of recurrent helplessness and check, and the mental pain of fear, which all men experience in the hours of that intimate weakness, that searching chill, that accompany the collapses to which he became increasingly exposed ; the fearful inability to control thought, once the nerve-system is disorganized. That this was the weapon he must use, became more and more clear to him ; suffering rather than activity must be the method of his apostolate ; even, he must be that kind of apostle that the Martyrs were. He was singularly exempt from any tendency to use the more violent phraseology of asceticism, or the formulas of ecstasy ; this makes it the more significant that he thinks, and begins not rarely to affirm, that his rôle in life is henceforward to be a "victim," to offer himself along with Christ upon His Cross

rather than with Christ teaching in temple, healing by the roadside, or gathering the crowds. That the transition seemed not too hard, that he passed, as far as one could see, without any harsh shock from the old way of life and thinking to the new, proved that after all the change was not a radical one, but rather of perspective, of emphasis. He really had lived detached, in the rush of the business ; he had not clung to the plans, the programmes ; he really had wanted to please God in God's way, and had not dictated the manner of his service. Still, the result of the shifted perspective was visible ; he seemed incredibly more gentle, more unhurried, more grave in his kindness, during the last few months. Men who came to our house, not to see Father Plater, or who perhaps addressed but a few words to him, have since returned and spoken to me about him, and a recurrent phrase has been : " I think he had the kindest eyes I have ever seen." That is a great tribute, for it must have been something remarkable indeed which should cause one to notice anything else in them, rather than their terrible fatigue. His eyes had grown heavy, lustreless, and with tired folds and lines looped round them, and, as I quoted, they never seemed to smile, in spite of the ready welcome of his lips ; but they were assuredly eyes that made you know his true and generous affection ; and that when he was clearly too exhausted, you would have thought, even to see to whom he might be speaking, he yet could penetrate to that innermost good in the soul that Our Lord loved and that therefore was so lovable.

This purifying, deepening work was, then, to be discerned in Father Plater during the last and suffering months of his life here.

He would not, I confessed, have allowed himself this retrospect, but we have the right to make it, to encourage ourselves by the sight of a man's life so utterly of a piece, so united in its seeming scatteredness as to be able, under God's gentle touches, to fall at once into all its right proportions, and to reveal itself, while we still just had time to see it, as a whole. We have, too, the right, I think, to wish that we had been permitted to watch also the last weeks, when, as we have been told, the pressure seemed to have vanished, and, without the old haste and anxiety and perhaps imperfection coming back to distract us, we could have seen the beautiful spectacle of a soul really free, really happy, at peace, and expanding to the cloudless rays of God. To have seen again the child in him, unembarrassed by life's sophistications ; the priest in him, untormented by the duties that could never be fulfilled ; the strong life, just having power to allow itself to shine and to give warmth, and accepted at once by those who needed no more than to meet it to recognize what it stood for and could give.

At that sight we should have realized more easily how slight a thing is death ; with what strength, what ready exultation the spirit can pass into its wider way of living ; how certain it is that Father Plater's heaven is no idle one, and that his eternal rest is not inactive.

At least it is our duty and our privilege to brace ourselves with the conviction that Father Plater has only begun, in complete liberty, to work : what he did here was but the struggling, fumbling, first beginnings of foundation-stuff, on which his powerful spirit means now to build.

But not now, we may be sure, has he ceased to

wish to work co-operatively : he expects that his friends will still lend their labour to assist his immensely strengthened hands ; he looks for minds that will attune themselves to receive his counsel, wiser now than ever ; for wills resolute to endure a responsibility all the heavier because he can contribute so much more to the joint endeavour ; for a loyal love which will not disappoint the affection that refused, to the end, to fade in the weariness of his eyes, and now, on its side, can never play us false.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX I

THE JESUIT HOUSE OF STUDIES AT OXFORD

FROM 1870, the date of the Test Act of Mr. Gladstone, the University of Oxford was open to Catholics. The English hierarchy, however, at that time deprecated their going there, but Pope Leo XIII, in 1895, gave Catholics permission to frequent the two Universities of Oxford and Cambridge on certain conditions. In the next year Rome gave separate leave to clerics to go there, too. The General of the Society of Jesus, true to the ideal of St. Ignatius, strongly supported the opening of a Jesuit House of Studies at Oxford, and on September 9, 1896, Father R. F. Clarke arrived with three scholastic students at 40 St. Giles, and very soon moved to 11 St. Giles, a house originally built as a "grange" of the nuns of Godstow. This was then known as Clarke's Hall, and was technically what is known as a Private Hall, the existence of which terminates with the death or resignation of its Head. While it exists it is known by the name of that Head. Father Clarke did in fact die suddenly on September 10, 1900, and the Hall, strictly speaking, was no more. The Vice-Chancellor, Dr. Thomas Fowler, nominated as Temporary Master the Rev. J. O'Fallon Pope, and after a variety of technical difficulties, overcome by the extreme kindness of the University officials, in particular of Sir William Anson, Warden of All Souls, one of the University Members of Parliament and late Vice-Chancellor, this appointment was confirmed on October 23 in Convocation. In fact, the statutes of the University were also altered to avoid some special difficulties, which it would be unnecessary to describe, recurring. The Hall was now known as Pope's Hall, and to it Father Plater came first as an undergraduate in 1900, and again as Master in 1916. It was accordingly known as Plater's Hall till the alteration of its status told of in the text, p. 185.

APPENDIX II

VERS DE SOCIÉTÉ

In 1897 Mr. E. V. Lucas edited, and published at Grant Richards', *Mrs. Turner's Cautionary Stories*. They were chosen from five books written by that admirable lady, and, says Mr. Lucas, "between the years 1810 and 1850 were on the shelves of most nurseries." The public was so enchanted by the verses of this book that it was several times reprinted, and Charles Plater met it, at Oxford, in its 1902 edition. He and some confrères, deeming the moral attached to some of Mrs. Turner's tales too obvious, and that attached to others not obvious enough, emended the poems and added some derisive quatrains. Plater sent the emended version to Mr. Lucas as a loan; Mr. Lucas, however, retained it, eliciting thereby a reproachful letter from Stonyhurst which he allows me to print here. I think it will sufficiently show Charles Plater's peculiar talent for the *vers de société* that his grandmother so delighted in. They are strictly in Mrs. Turner's style.

"Mama! how I should love to dwell
In the same street as E. V. L.,
To watch his grave and modest mien,
His honest brow, his eye serene.

"With interest my gaze would scan
That truly admirable man,
In whose large heart must surely burn a
Devouring love for Mrs. Turner.

"He passes his laborious days
In editing her moral lays;
And often it occurs to me
How very proper he must be.

"My dear," the careful parent said,
"I beg you not to be misled;
For E. V. L., I'm much afraid,
Is just as bad as they are made.

“ A biblioklept confirmed is he,
And gropes mid darkest villainy ;
For E. V. L., as you may spy ,
Is EVIL—destitute of I.”

Mr. Lucas was obdurate : Stonyhurst had to buy another copy, and he wrote,

“ has sadly learned
Mrs. Turner's not returned.”

APPENDIX III

A WORKERS' COLLEGE

Reprinted from the *Catholic Times*, January 21, 1922 :

“ Blue books would be voted by the ordinary reader as dull in the extreme. They are, nevertheless, undeniably valuable, and to many a reader, appreciative of their worth, and consequently keen enough to find and even to enjoy their interest, there is positive romance alive within their pages. One thinks of definitely hued books called by their colour, because lying in front of me is the latest of a series of yellow books in which value, interest, and even romance are always present, palpable or implied, for any eager or discerning reader. This series is that of the Catholic Social Year-Books which emanate directly or indirectly from the Catholic Social Guild. The latest of these ‘ yellow-backs ’ deals with ‘ The Catholic Workers’ College at Oxford,’ which has been projected as a memorial to the late Father Plater, S.J.

“ Many of us know how enthusiastically Father Plater laboured to arouse Catholics to a sense of social needs and to a necessity for making Catholic principles influential in the social work of this country. He laboured ardently, untiringly, and with an infectious youthful zeal. He died at an early age. His premature passing was doubtless hastened

by his unremitting efforts and his utter disregard for self. Now there is proposed, as a memorial to this gallant crusader and captain in the social army, just such an institution as would have evoked his cheers. For it is intended to have at Oxford a Catholic Workers' College, a place where scholars drawn from the class of those who have of necessity to earn their own living may study under University conditions in order to equip themselves with knowledge and sound principles respecting social problems of our day.

"The problems are pressing enough, in all conscience. And the dangers ahead are very patent. Probably in the past the sin, 'crying to Heaven for vengeance,' of defrauding labourers of their wages has been needlessly and frequently committed: the spirit of obligations has been ignored if the letter may have been technically observed. Yet it would be tragic if the fight against injustice were not fought with the weapons of justice itself, if a pagan expediency and selfishness were to replace the divine sanctions of right and wrong as the mainspring of social action. Those Divine sanctions are superimposed upon capitalist and trade unionist alike. Now, there are many matters beyond those of capital and labour which affect social conditions, and which require to be considered and practically dealt with in the light of those same Divine sanctions of conduct. The Church is the great guardian and expounder of such sanctions, and it would be a splendid thing if some at least of our Catholic social workers could receive a thorough training not only in economics and history, but in the great principles which reflect the Divine Will and not what human cupidity may deem desirable.

"It would be no less splendid if these would-be Catholic social workers received their training and pursued their studies in a place of fair and ancient beauty like Oxford, where thought and fancy leap the centuries, where the dreaming spires tell rather of unaging time than of the generation swirling round their bases, and where, remote from the surging market-place, they might see the world and its

insistent problems 'with a wide eye calm upon the whole of things.'

"Let no one think that in 'poor' students going to Oxford there is any break with the real traditions of the University. There is rather a captivating return to the spirit in which the University was founded. It was scarcely intended by the early founders that the colleges of Oxford were to be a preserve for aristocratic and plutocratic young men, to study or to learn manners, to rag and row, to play games, to flirt at times and to feast often, to get into debt, and to look upon the wine when it is red. The earliest Oxonians were genuinely poor scholars, living austerely on plain food and high thoughts during term time, and between-whiles forced to beg for their very sustenance. Our 'Catholic Worker' students would be the real aristocrats in Oxford, the truest representatives of those who laid deep and strong and lasting the foundations on which Oxford's culture, grace, and charm have so alluringly been reared.

"A beginning has already been made to realize this splendid idea. A principal has been appointed—the Rev. Leo O'Hea, S.J., M.A.—lodgings have been secured, and three students have begun their course. Lectures have been given gratis by experts, helpful acquaintance with Catholic undergraduates has been achieved, and most valuable help has been accorded with sympathy and graciousness by both Catholic and non-Catholic organizations within the University. It only remains for the Catholic body to provide sufficient enthusiasm to make this Workers' College a dazzling success. It is hoped that the various societies which devote themselves more or less to Catholic social work will subscribe to pay the fees of certain selected students as well as to form a capital fund to secure and furnish a permanent building for the College. The students are to be drawn from the class of 'workers,' using the word in a wide sense, but it is not meant that the course of study should be used merely for getting on in the world, for personal advancement, but rather for the mental and moral

equipment of some of those who are keen to bring it about that the pressing and almost insoluble problems of the time shall be considered and solved, not in an atmosphere of mental chaos and moral anarchy, but with some assistance from Catholic principles enunciated clearly, cogently, and convincingly by cultivated intellects using capable, possibly eloquent tongues. The Workers' College is meant to put a superb, arresting, and influential culmination to work, so well initiated with study-clubs and the like.

“The present demands of the scheme are very modest. It is suggested that some £3,300 are required to acquire and furnish a suitable building, and that the cost of each student for administration charges, maintenance, and tuition will be about £110 or £120 a year. It is hoped that various branches of Catholic social organizations, such as the Catholic Social Guild, the Catholic Young Men's Society, the Catholic Federation, and the like, will contrive to subscribe enough to found scholarships in respect of which such branches will select the students by examination or other approved manner in order to select the best and most promising, either men or women.

“We Catholics ought not to rest content with this modest proposal. It will be a magnificent achievement if the small scheme already outlined and begun is carried to fulfilment. But the scheme deserves to be met with an enthusiasm that will laugh at such a modest aim. It is an opportunity for hitching our wagon to a star. It may be said at once that our means are slender and the calls upon them many. But here is a scheme not parochial, not diocesan, but national, which should appeal to all who care for the coming of God's kingdom on earth, and should attract the interest of every class desirous of justice. It should inspire the workers and uplift them by its inspiration: no less should it appeal to those with great possessions who still desire to acquire their wealth in all fairness and in sympathy with their fellow-men. But, taking it primarily as an occasion for a display of high-minded zeal on the part of the workers, see how easily a great triumph may be achieved

by co-operation. Suppose that in three great cities where there are within reasonable bounds a considerable number of Catholics—say that in London, in Liverpool, and in Manchester there are three thousand workers willing each week to forgo something—the watching of a football match, a cinema show, a packet of cigarettes, or a round of drinks—so as to be able to send a shilling to the Workers' College, look at the stupendous result. Nine thousand shillings make £450; £450 a week for one year will make £23,400. Why, the Catholic Workers' College could be housed with dignity and have a numerous band of scholars from the outset, and in less than a generation it could be a great foundation and have its home in a building fair as Oxford's best."

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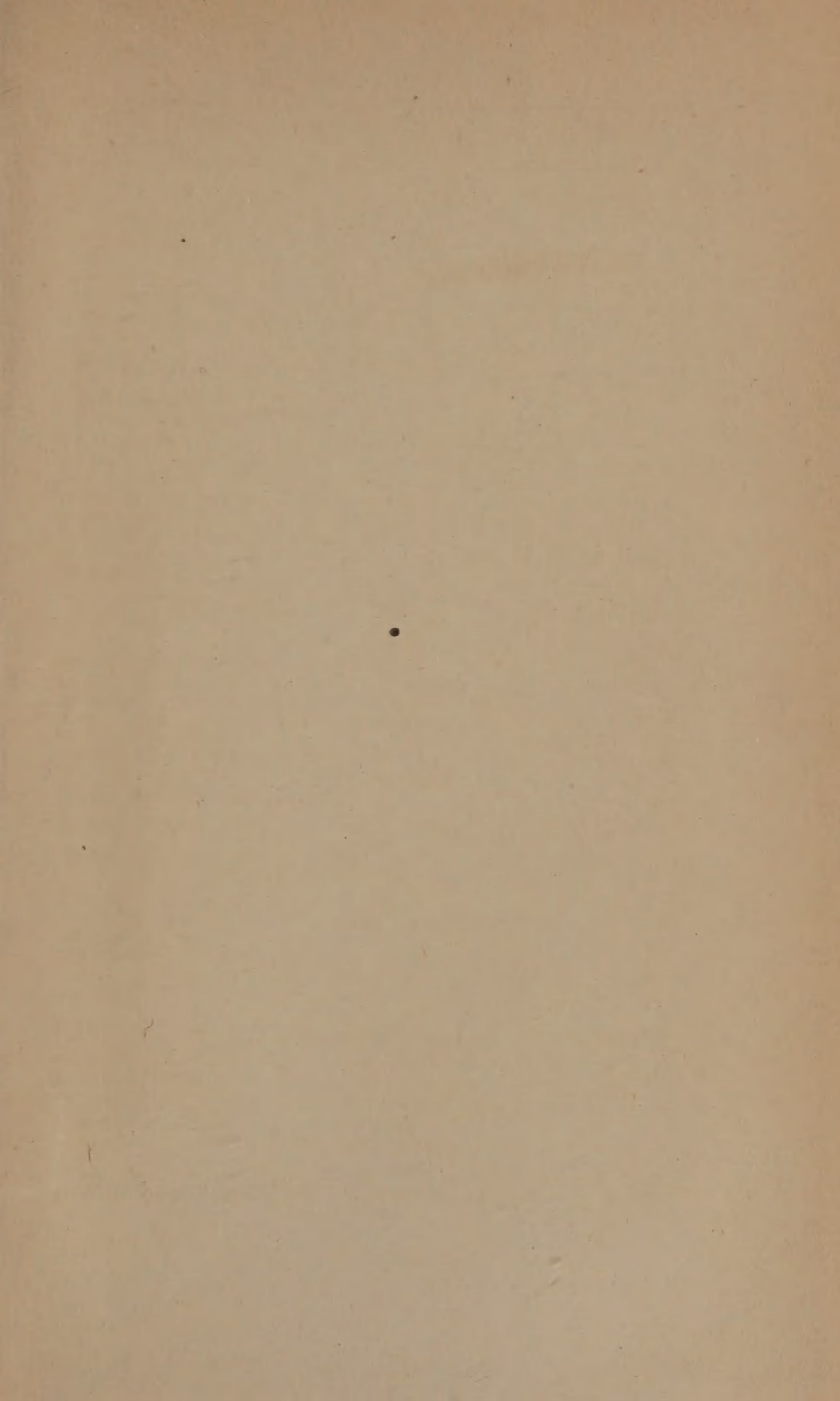
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